

BLUE BOOK

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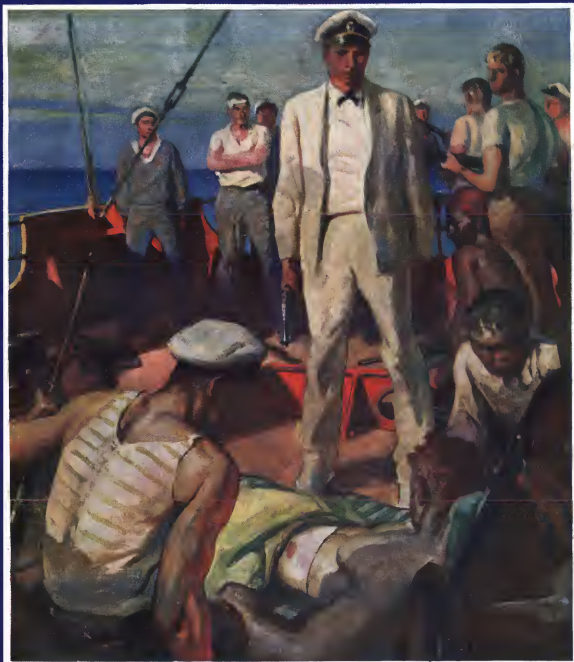
March

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MARCH 1936

THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE

VOL. 62 No. 5



PAINTED BY HERBERT MORTON STOOPS

CARAVAN TREASURE

by James Francis Dwyer...Edgar Rice Burroughs,
H. Bedford-Jones, William Makin, Robert Mill



**"THE FIRST GIRL I EVER
LIKED — and these
Pimples had to
come!"**

**But it
wasn't
too late,
Ben
found, to
mend the
trouble**

I THOUGHT YOU AND THAT
NICE NEW BABS GIRL NEXT
DOOR WERE GOING TO BE
FRIENDS — WHAT
HAPPENED?

DON'T BE FOOLISH, MOM.
GUESS I'LL TAKE THIS
MAGAZINE UP TO MY
ROOM AND READ!

MOM MUST BE BLIND.
I WISH BABS WAS —
WISH THESE PIMPLES
WERE INVISIBLE!
WISH I'D KNOWN
BAB'S BEFORE —

YOUR MOTHER SAID TO
COME UP — WELL FOR THE
LUVVA — ADMIRING YOUR
MAP, MISS
AMERICA
???

OH, SHUT UP! I WAS
JUST COUNTING THESE
PIMPLES, BLASTEM!!

DOES SEEM TO BE A LOT OF 'EM —
SAY, YOU KNOW MY COUSIN RAY — HE
TOOK FLEISCHMANN'S YEAST
FOR HIS PIMPLES —
WIPED 'EM RIGHT
OFF THE OLD PHIZ

FLEISCHMANN'S
YEAST DID THAT?
SAY, LEAD
ME TO
IT!

LATER

GOSH, I'M
GLAD I GOT
RID OF THOSE
PIMPLES!

BABS, GO TO
THE SCHOOL
DANCE WITH
ME NEXT
SATURDAY?

WHY, I SORT OF HAD
A DATE, BUT —
YES, I'D LOVE TO!

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BLUE BOOK



MARCH, 1936

MAGAZINE

VOL. 62, NO. 5

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Cover Design

Painted by Herbert Morton Stoops

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Publisher, The Blue Book Magazine

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"The Treasure of Sheba"

A thrill-crammed adventure
of the Red Wolf of Arabia

By WILLIAM MAKIN

A pre-view from the

HAWK

THE Arctic breeze was chill, and sharp as the ice-cakes scraping and tearing along the steel sides of the whaler *Bearcat*, bulling her path steadily through the ice-fields off the north Alaskan coast.

Breath poured from my nostrils thick as cigarette-smoke, condensing to hoar-frost on the collar of my great-coat. The southern sky was warmly aglow, crossed by alternating fan-like rays of red and bluish gray, reaching and broadening high into the vault. Even the sun was strange on that memorable morning, as if heralding the astounding events to come.

At my side, elbows on rail and shaggy iron-gray head a little bent, stood Captain Phineas Scott, thoughtful and silent.

Since apparently he had not heard my earlier question, I put it to him again as if for the first time:

"Three years is a long time for the *Narwhal* to be missing. Do you think she could have survived, or—"

"Aye—ye asked me that before," he answered to my prompting. "I heard ye, sir. But faith," he continued, pursuing anew a line of thought that evidently fascinated him more than did the missing *Narwhal*, "I was thinkin' more of him ye call Kioga the Snow-Hawk. Ye've been the whole night tellin' me Kioga's story—me who should have been in my bunk hours ago! But what I want to know is, what happened to Kioga *after* he left civilization?"

"Find the schooner *Narwhal*," I reminded him, "and you may get an answer."

"I'm a whalin' skipper, sir," he answered. "Not a fortune-teller."

The *Bearcat* steamed silently through a stretch of open sea. A seaman's cough sounded distinctly from eighty feet up in the crow's-nest. The air itself grew somewhat warmer as the mists thickened round about the moving ship, and for long hours silence reigned supreme. And then—

Loud as thunder the voice of the lookout roared down:

"Schoo-o-ner! Schooner aho-o-y! Two points off the starboard bow!"

Scott jumped as if stung. Together we both wheeled facing forward. What I then saw I found scarcely believable.

Bearing down on us was the hugest ship my gaze had ever fallen on, coming slowly on like some overpowering Colossus, beneath which we must surely go under to destruction.

Instinctively I leaped behind the deck-house, there to brace myself against the shock of collision when that looming vessel should crash us. Then I heard the reassuring voice of Captain Scott.

"All right, sir—all's well."

long-awaited sequel (to begin in our next issue!) to—

of the *WILDERNESS*

I turned at the words, not a little astonished by his calm, and moved to where I could again look upon that terrifying image. It was gone as if it never existed, though the fog still hung thick on the water, tinted by sunset colors.

"Talk of a phantom and 'twill surely appear," laughed the skipper. "But 'tisn't often a body comes along with the ghost!"

"You mean to say that what we saw was a phantom?" I demanded.

"Mist-magic, sir," he assured me, in all seriousness. "Though some call it 'looming,' when fog magnifies a ship like that."

"But it was a ship!"

"Aye!" And now the Captain's voice quivered with excitement. "Look across the sea, there, through that scatterin' fog-bank. What d'ye see?"

For a moment I saw nothing but ocean vapors. Then came the lookout's cry:

"Schooner aho-oy! Dead ahead! It's the *Narwhal*!"

Suddenly, vague and dim through the rosy mists that overhung the sea, came a ship—a schooner under shortened sail, making slow headway toward the *Bearcat*. It was the long-overdue *Narwhal*, Munro's adventure-ship!

Never do I think again to see a sight so rare and wonderful.

She was a thing of pastel beauty, a fairy creation of snow and frost, the ice-coat on her all afire, her hull agleam like plated gold, her yards and spars all glittering with reddish sunlight, her hanging anchor a silver double-crook, carved with ice-designs in high relief and hung on clearest crystal rope. And in the mirror of the sea the splendor of her image floated.

Yet what about her chilled me deep, made me expect the worst that could befall? This: She seemed the very soul of solitude, lone and inexpressibly forlorn—but why I could not quickly understand.

The fog-horn bellow of Captain Scott rolled across the water:

"Aho-o-y! *Narwhal*! Welcome home!"

Ensued a pause. The thunderous echo of Scott's mighty voice beat back from the *Narwhal's* flank, now little more than half a cable's length broadside of us.

But from the *Narwhal* no sign, no sound, no slightest evidence of having heard our hail. No movement on her icy decks—a silent ship, moving slowly astern on a silent sea.

A steamy *whoooooom* from the *Bearcat's* whistle brought no more response. I found Scott's narrowed eyes boring into mine beneath his rime-rimmed brows.

"There's your *Narwhal*, sure enough," he said. "But somethin' must be wrong aboard."

Then, without awaiting my answer, he gave the order to go about. In answering the helm the *Bearcat* took the little wind from the *Narwhal's* sail, which slatted noisily as she yawed to port, drifting under our lee. From astern a rope leaped from a seaman's hands, to fall upon the *Narwhal's* after bitts. A moment later she was bound to our side, fore and aft. Scott turned to me.

"Come along!" he snapped. Down the ladder he went, to tread the *Narwhal's* icy decks. Close upon his heels came I.

None save Munro, her owner, knew better than I the physical equipment of this modern ship when she left for the Arctic. What changes I saw aboard of her are burned indelibly into my memory. As for Scott:

"God save us!" he exclaimed after a quick glance about the gleaming decks. "'Tis the *Narwhal*, sure enough. But what in the name o' Judas did they do to her?"

Indeed, the *Narwhal's* remaining sail was not canvas, but some coarse woven stuff defying description, and punctured with ragged holes torn through as by a blast of grape-shot.

Her foremast was split and scored beneath a rude binding of hand-twisted rope; and imbedded in its base beneath the fracture at the deck-line was a round sphere of pitted rusty iron—a cannon-ball of medium caliber.

Forward of her deck-house, mounted upon a wooden block and built to swivel, was a small cannon of cast iron. The strange gun had been fired, and contained neither shot nor powder, though near by were several six-pound balls, imbedded in ice, which also coated the gun-carriage.

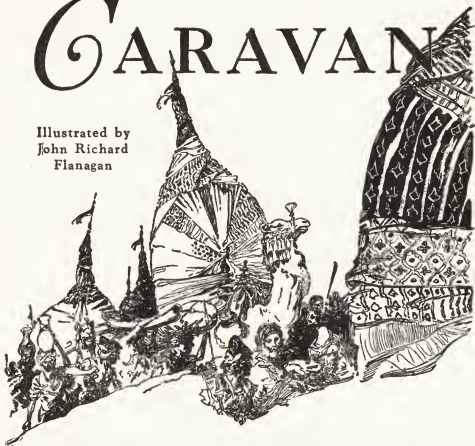
A little aft, from one side of the deck-house protruded a thin piece of reddish metal, a hard-thrown knife-blade whose handle, broken off, lay in the scuppers. Farther astern, on the same side, piercing deep the deckhouse wall, was a scattered group of long arrows, the feathers scarcely ruffled. A spear, bladed with copper, was wedged between after mast and a rope coil, which was also of crude hand-manufacture. Far astern a heavier battery, of the size known as demi-cannon, was mounted in oak, bolted to the deck. The wheel was lashed, the lashings ice-sheathed.

All this I glimpsed as I moved toward where Captain Scott battered at the deck-house hatch, which presently came open before his heavy exertions. A moment he vanished within, while I struggled across the slippery deck. When I reached the deck-house, he was emerging, his face noticeably pale. Our eyes met, mine questioning his.

"There's death down there," he answered solemnly.

CARAVAN

Illustrated by
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"Plunder gathered through untold centuries by raids and murders and unholy doings—a blood-stained legacy scraped together by Satan. This was the object of our desperate quest to the ends of the earth in Africa. . . . My heart pounded madly as the story roared over me—as it was to pound even more madly time after time on this great adventure."

By JAMES FRANCIS DWYER

NOW, a devil in a family is a fine thing. He acts like yeast on the imagination, and it's a never-ending thrill he gives to the sober ones. It is of my uncle, Thurland Spillane, that I am thinking right now.

A little child was I when he left my father's farm that is on the road from Glengarriff to Kenmare; but I had heard much of him. For each blessed day that passed, there arose in our farmhouse a certain massed wonder as to where he was and what he was doing. And not on our farm alone. Neighbors, through fear or admiration, and there is a close relationship between those two emotions, would ask if we had heard from him.

Cunningly they would question my

father. "And have you had a letter from your fine brother, Thurland?" they would ask; but we all knew that out of our hearing, he was "Thurland the Devil," or "Mad Thurland Spillane" when they spoke of him.

Polite are the Irish: a strange, cynical politeness that hits you like the spur of a rooster. And although they asked, they didn't care three brass farthings whether Thurland was alive or dead, or whether he was in Patagonia or supping with the Khan of Tartary. And fine reason they had for their indifference.

Then, on a wild night in January, Thurland Spillane came home. Not a scratch of a pen to announce his coming. After seven years and a month, he

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TREASURE



came back to the farm, and the little imps of hell were at his heels.

Never was there such a night. The wolf-winds came down from Macgillicuddy's Reeks and raced across the Valley of the Sheen. My mother's lips were moving in prayer as she listened to their shrieking. With a million fingers they scratched at the slates of the roof till the rafters groaned in their efforts to hold the same slates in position, and out in the farmyard the old pots and bits of tin danced a rigadon.

Suddenly the door of the kitchen was thrust inward, and under a fusillade of snow and sleet, a tall, muscular man with a strange, lean face was swept into the room.

My father sprang to his feet in alarm. He picked up the oil lamp and held it high; then in great astonishment he cried out the name of his brother. "Thur!" he cried. "Good God! It's Thurland!"

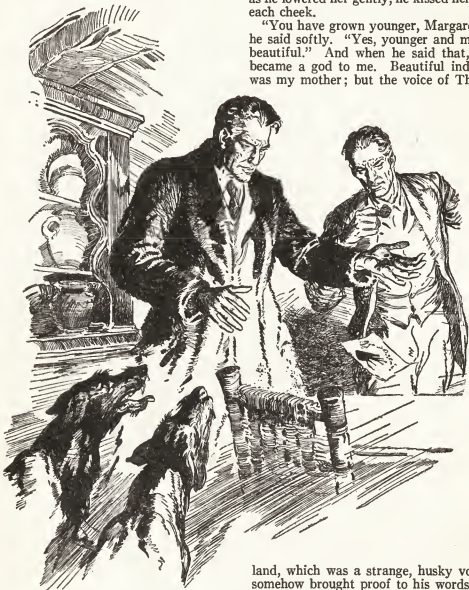
Caravan—a splendid word! Visions of camels with tassels and trappings; bearded men and veiled women; packs of tapestries and rich silks, dyes, perfumes and precious stones: treasure so wonderful that a glimpse of it would catch your throat—caravan treasure!

The tall man nodded casually. Casually, mind you, though he had not seen my father for seven years; then he shook an arm free of the great fur coat that covered him, and thrust his hand forward; in the fingers was a hundred-pound note.

map of Ireland with a trimming of purple ink running completely around it.

Putting his hands under the arms of my mother, Thurland lifted her high with no more effort than an ordinary man would make in lifting a baby; then, as he lowered her gently, he kissed her on each cheek.

"You have grown younger, Margaret," he said softly. "Yes, younger and more beautiful." And when he said that, he became a god to me. Beautiful indeed was my mother; but the voice of Thur-



"Have you change for this, Michael?" he asked quietly. "Bill Slavin drove me out from Kenmare, and I have no small money to pay him with."

The lot of us were standing in the half-shadow, outside the circle of light that was thrown by the lamp my father held; and Thurland Spillane, glancing at us, saw my mother. Quickly he stepped forward, dropping the bank-note on the table, where I had just completed a fine

land, which was a strange, husky voice, somehow brought proof to his words.

My father peered at the bank-note. When he saw that it was a hundred pounds, he cried out that he didn't have the change. "How much do you want for Bill Slavin?" he asked.

"I promised him a fiver, but I'll give him ten if you have it," said Thurland. "It's a sluttish night that Kerry has staged to welcome me home."

My father managed to rake up ten pounds in single notes. He handed these to his brother; and Thurland put out his

left hand for the hundred-pound note that he had dropped when he embraced my mother. He took it up and offered it to my father. "You keep this, Michael," he said, "and tomorrow we will fix—" And with that he stopped and let out a cry that startled us. He flung the bill from him as if it had been a serpent, and he thrust his hands into the lamplight. "It's blood!" he cried. "Christ's woes! Now where the devil did I get that?"

He flung the bill from him as if it had been a serpent. "It's blood!" he cried. "Christ's woes! Now where the devil did I get that?"



"No, no, it's not blood!" I broke in. "The note fell on the map that I was making with purple ink! It's ink! It's ink!"

Now the manner in which Thurland had flung the bill from him and cried out the word "Blood!" had a curious effect upon the lot of us standing in the kitchen. Difficult indeed would it be for me to explain in words. For words are hard things at the best of times; and of all words, the English are the hardest. Soft is the Gaelic, and the French and the Italian have music in them; but the English is a language for buying and selling and for the giving of sharp orders. But this I know: The sharp jerk of his arm and the words with the strange oath

that we had never heard before, brought something into the room. Something that we couldn't see; something that was slimy and wet as if it had come up out of the Bog of Ballyvourney with wisps of turf hanging to it. My mother made the sign of the Cross hurriedly, her eyes bigger than I ever saw them. My father looked at the door.

Thurland Spillane, head thrown back, hands raised like a fighter guarding his body, stared at me for a full minute; then he relaxed and laughed softly. "You gave me a fright, young fellow," he said. "Dry that stuff off the note and give it to your father."

He walked to the door and stepped into the sleet and the hail. For an instant we saw the lights of Bill Slavin's sidecar, dull like the eyes of old Paddy O'Mara, who suffers from cataract; and we heard the mare whinny. Silent were all of us—breathing hurriedly, as if the arrival of my father's brother had shut

off the supply of air. A burning log crashed in the big fireplace; my brother Pat yelped with fear.

Back came Thurland, stamping into the kitchen. He shook the great coat from his shoulders. It dropped to the floor, humping itself in ridges of sleek and shining fur, so that, when the air went out of it slowly, it sunk down like an animal crouching.

OUR two dogs, Sarsfield and Emmet, lay beneath my father's chair; and they, watching the hillock of fur with shining eyes, were certain the coat was alive; they growled loudly, hackles rising.

Thurland glanced at the dogs; a queer grin went over his face; then, with a quick twist of his shoe, he drove the mass of fur into the teeth of the two!

Sarsfield, with a yelp of fear, hurled himself backward so that he nearly went into the fireplace; but Emmet was game. The coat had fallen like an avalanche upon Emmet, but the growls that came from beneath it showed that he had not lost heart.

A great dog was Emmet. Beneath the coat and hidden from our view, he rushed the fur ulster across the kitchen, nearly sweeping my mother off her feet, while Sarsfield howled as he tried to get out of the way. By the growls that came from beneath the coat, we knew that Emmet thought he was up against some monster of another age, but he was going to his death with no slur on his courage.

We did not like the noise made by Emmet. My mother screamed, her nerves being a little upset with the matter of the purple ink; so my father stooped and tore the coat from the back of the dog and threw it on the settle.

Emmet ran under the armchair, but his growls showed us that so far as he was concerned, the fight could have gone on for hours. A great dog was Emmet, with the blood of the big Irish wolfhounds in his strong body.

Thurland was laughing quietly. The anger of the dog amused him.

"You haven't changed much," said my father dryly.

"Why should I?" asked Thurland. "I'm satisfied the way I am, as the porcupine said to the fairy when she wanted to make a grasshopper of him."

My mother put a cloth on the table and brought food for my uncle, and we sat and watched him as he ate. . . .

Strange in looks and manner was Thurland Spillane. Once, years later, in

a picture shop in Cork, I saw a painting of the head of a man who was a *doge* of Venice in the long ago. I think his name was Dandolo, but I'm not sure. Now, this Dandolo and Thurland Spillane were as alike as two pins: The same lean, prideful head, the skin hammered tight to the bones as if it had been pulled on like a turtle-neck sweater after the bony foundation had been laid; the bold eyes that looked out like two spearmen on a castle wall. A great resemblance was there between the painting of the old *doge* and Thurland. Wild hawks of trouble were they both.

"And where might you have come from now?" asked my father, after Thurland had taken the edge off his appetite.

"From London," answered Thurland.

"Oh, London," said my father, not particularly impressed, for London is no distance at all from Kerry. "Then you've been quite close to us all the time, but you couldn't waste a stamp to let us know you were alive."

"I was only in London five hours," said Thurland. "I came a roundabout way out of Russia. By China and other places."

"Out of Rooshia?" murmured my father, and he stared at his brother. "Out of Rooshia?" And that slimy thing that had come up out of the Bog of Ballyvourney with the wisps of turf hanging to it, moved around the kitchen and chilled the corners where we crouched.

THURLAND surveyed my father for a few minutes; then, in that strange husky voice, he spoke. "Michael, brother o' mine," he said, and the words bubbled with the emotion he put into them, "I have hurried here because another person—a person that I love more than my two eyes and my two hands—is making for your farm. Across the world she is heading for this little spot in Kerry! Heading for Ireland, of which she hadn't heard till I told her. Would you believe that, Michael? She hadn't heard of Ireland, because it is so wee and far-away from where she lived. But she is coming!"

He swung himself around in his chair and stared with his fierce eyes at the door. And we stared at the door. And the two dogs, Sarsfield and Emmet, stared at the door.

"She is coming!" repeated Thurland, and his voice was so wonderful that his words seemed dusted with gold. Ay! They might have come from some fine

verbal Ophir where beautiful words are coined. "She is heading for the Green Tree Farm, on the Kenmare Road, whose owner is Michael Spillane! It's myself that wrote it down for her. And I've hurried to get here before her. Do you know why? Michael, my brother, do you know why?"

My father wet his lips and answered. "I do not," he said.

"There might be trouble," said Thurland Spillane; the husky voice dropped as he spoke. "There might be trouble."

"Trouble?" repeated my father. "Why did you make my farm a meeting-place if there was going to be trouble?"

"LISTEN, Michael," said Thurland, leaning forward and fixing my father with those keen eyes of his. "When I gave your farm as an address, I never thought that the person to whom I gave it would ever wish to come here. Never! A full year back I was asked for an address where a letter would reach me, and I thought of this farm and wrote it down. But things changed with the devil's own suddenness, and now this person wishes to find me. Do you understand? It is a lady, Michael. A lady such as you never dreamed of. And I have rushed across the world to get here first."

Throbbing were our ears. A terrible expectancy was upon us all. That voice of Thurland Spillane was a voice that was made for the telling of miracles. It had little hammers in it that crushed disbelief. It had fine notes in it, notes that ran in front of the facts they unloosed like the naked guards that run with sticks in front of Eastern kings.

The pulse of the house was high. Sarsfield whined; my brother Pat kicked him. Outside, the storm raged, but we sat silent, lips dry, eyes rounded, ears aching for news. For we knew that Thurland Spillane was going to tell a story—a story that would tramp around the kitchen and touch us with hot hands at one moment and with cold hands the next. A story into which would be woven the play of swords, the jingle of spurs, the soft voices of women, cries in the night, and the gurgles of dying men. And we knew that there would be magic, and witchcraft, and things not understood. We knew that; for Thurland, being Irish, had made a fine bed of terror on which to roll his words. . . .

Now, it is the listener that makes the story. Into him or her you pour the words the way Tommy Grogan pours the

malt and stuff into the little still he has up in the mountains for making a drop of whisky for himself and his neighbors. And the still and the malt make the whisky. So the listener to any story must help, like the worm in the little affair that makes Grogan's grog, taking the most from the words his ears gather up. I, being young on that wild night Thurland Spillane came home, cannot tell this story as he told it, and that's a misfortune; but I can try to put into hard little words the fine golden stream that he unloosed upon us.

"There is a place stuck up on the rump of Siberia that is called Irkutsk," he said. "I have come from Irkutsk."

Now, you may know of Irkutsk. You may have been there. It doesn't matter. Your Irkutsk, and the city that Thurland Spillane told us of that evening, would not be the same. For I was thirteen years of age when I listened to his story, and at that age belief rides wide and high and handsome. And tales are lush and fat and colorful. And every word of the teller raises a mist of glory in the mind of the listening child. A fine world it would be if we could remain so all our lives.

This Irkutsk—the Irkutsk I saw as Thurland Spillane talked—squats on the edge of a desert. And the wastes come up to the walls of it and breathe on it. Fierce hot winds of summer blow over the town, and the winter winds flay the faces of the people like Cossack knouts. And in the city are dance-halls and gambling places and drinking-bars. And on the streets are galloping droshkys, and mad riders, and Torgod-Mongols, gypsies, and flat-faced folk of the Yue-chi tribes. This is how we saw it as Thurland spoke of it.

AND it is the center for fur—for real fur. Caravans bring out of the wastes bales and bales of pelts—pelts of otter and sable, Siberian squirrel and musquash, Tatar foal and ermine and white fox. And they market the pelts in Irkutsk, so that the place throbs with the smell of them. Up to high heaven goes the odor of skins that you might find later on the shoulders of a princess in Bond Street. There the pelt would only have the perfume of the lady instead of the stench that it had in Irkutsk. For clever are the men who deal with furs.

And on the streets of this town the traders and buyers drink hot tea and vodka, and they dance with strange

women in the big cafés, and often there are fights and killings. And there are wild raids by the police, and men are dragged off to prison and are never seen again. And their names are not whispered by their friends. Because of the Fear, of the great Fear that sits on Russia like a broody hen on a clutch of eggs. Now this is the Irkutsk I saw on that evening, and I will never know another. Never! It was in that town that Thurland Spillane met the Lady.

My mother moistened her lips and ordered Pat and Kate and me to bed. But we couldn't move. Our ears held our legs prisoner, and my mother lacked the force to make us obey. And the wind howled; and Emmet, the big hound, watched the fur coat, drooling at the mouth and making noises to show that he was not afraid of the thing if it wanted more fight. . . .

A terrible story-teller was my uncle—slow and with a sparseness of words that was strange. But golden words, that lit up the silences that came between them.

Now, when the lady walked into the story, I saw her. I was thirteen years of age, and she sprang up in front of my eyes as sweet women will in the minds of boys that dream. Then and there I loved her. For he made her beautiful. Yes, his words made her nearly as beautiful as she really was. I saw her there with Thurland Spillane in that strange town. Sitting with him in the glittering cafés, sipping the hot tea and nibbling little cakes covered with sugarplums. And riding with him in the galloping droschkys, wrapped in great fur robes.

A GAIN my mother tried to shoo us to bed, but Thurland looked at me, smiled, and asked her to let us stay.

His voice dropped lower—lower and softer. He was telling my father and mother of a pair of lovers. Dimly I saw them, walking through shaded parks beneath fine trees. But their love was secret, and how I knew that I cannot tell.

Suddenly my father leaned forward and spoke. "And her father was Nicholas?" he said.

"Yes, Nicholas," said Thurland Spillane, and then I understood. With a rush that took my breath, the knowledge rolled over me. Thurland Spillane had been telling of a secret love-affair between Nicholas, Czar of all the Russias, and a woman who was fairer than Deirdre of the Sorrows! Telling it with a thousand little supporting words that

held it up like the white stones of Kilneena Bridge! And the lady who rode with him in the galloping droschkys was the child of the two—the daughter of an emperor and a woman of Perm!

"**F**EW knew," said Thurland, and the words ran around the kitchen. "Few knew. But in Russia," he added, "one word becomes ten, and the ten become a thousand. The police have ears bigger than the clam-shells on your mantel. And there are more of them than there are herrings in the sea. In cafés and hotels, in sweet-shops and news-stands, in parks and at street-corners. Listening! Mother o' God, listening! Do you understand, Michael? Russia is a big ear that runs from the tundras to the Black Sea, and from the Wall of China to the little lands on the west that live in fear of her, lest she boil over and flood them. Ay, a big ear that sucks in every whisper that is unloosed. . . .

"They came after her," said Thurland Spillane, and his body stiffened, and his great legs went out with a jerk that frightened the dogs. "They came after her because they had heard. I had known her a month, but it wasn't a month; it was a million years! I had known her from the minute I was born in the old farmhouse below Paddy Cronin's mill. Known her in the flashing sunbeams, in the whisper of the wind in the wheat, in the song of birds, in the moonlight on Looscaunagh Lough! . . .

"We were cornered in a passage beneath the house where she lived. She and I. In the dark. There were seven of them. May God have mercy on my soul!"

"Children, go to bed!" cried my mother; but we whimpered protests as we watched the face of Thurland Spillane. And we watched his hands—his lean, strong, cunning hands.

"I had a sword," said Thurland, and he made the statement in a soft voice, as if ashamed. "I had a sword, but a sword is a poor thing in the dark. And as they came forward, they fired a bullet or two as a barrage. . . . There were steps in the passage, steps leading up to a higher level. I lifted her up the steps and followed her. Then I laid myself on the ground and stretched out my two arms in the darkness, so that I could clutch the throat of a man as he climbed after us. Clutch his throat and shut off speech before he could tell the others what had happened to him. . . .



With a little cry of weariness she slipped from me and fell.
And I knew that I would never get her to her feet again.

"Killers were they! Killers of the same brood that had taken the Czar and his family into the dirty cellar of a house in Ekaterinburg and shot them down. They would do the same to her. They had their orders. You've heard of Rasputin, Michael? Well, Rasputin had left notes about the meetings with her mother. They found them after his death. He was the grand spy of the Empress. . . .

"Do you know that there are eyes in your fingers, Michael? No? Well, there were eyes in mine. There in the dark. I tell you, man, it's the truth. For they closed in like a nice collar around the neck of the first one that came up the steps. Closed in before he could speak, and I drew him up the steps so quietly

that the men following him didn't think a thing. They thought he had climbed up swiftly to the higher level, and they hurried because they thought he might do all the killing and get all the reward. They hurried. Before I had squeezed the life out of one, his murderous mate was in my grip."

He was speaking to himself now. The hard eyes were glazed as they looked at the door. And through the door! And out across the breadth of Europe to a passage beneath a house in Irkutsk. For Thurland Spillane forgot that we were listening at that moment.

"Killers," he said; and the tone in which he spoke the word stirred the dogs. "Killers. Murderers, every one of them. . . . Murderers of women and

little children. At ten rubles a head they killed. Glory to God for the strength He put in my hands! For the great strength! . . . One after the other they came up the steps, crying out to the men in front and getting no answers, but coming on because the blood-lust pushed them. And I throttled them and laid them beside me. Seven of them! *Seven of them!*"

HE shouted the words, half-rose to his feet; then he remembered where he was, and sat himself down again.

"Easy," murmured my father. "Go easy, Thurl!"

But the kitchen of the Green Tree Farm was a confessional for Thurland Spillane. He could not stop. His words painted pictures before our eyes:

Thurland and the woman running through the night. Shouts, cries, curses, the *plack-plack* of shoon on cobblestones. . . . At one point I saw in fancy a stone bridge, Thurland Spillane cutting and thrusting, the woman crouched at his side. Plain he painted it, the ghost-hands of the moon touching the stones and the water. So full of color were the words that one had to claw through them to get at the facts.

"Police?" asked my father, and Thurland repeated the word in a voice of thunder. "*Police?*" he cried. "No, Michael, they were baby angels! Baby angels with little guns that sent you to glory! Baby angels with little knives that could slice your liver into strips! Baby angels that could lap up blood the way Mother Quinlan's old cat lapped up buttermilk!"

Suddenly Thurland lowered his voice and looked at my father. "Did you ever think I had much in my head, Michael?"

"Well," muttered my father, "I didn't think—"

"Of course you didn't!" interrupted Thurland. "But Michael, the head of Thurland Spillane is worth fifty thousand rubles in gold! I could have sold it for that if I climbed out of the cellars I hid in and met one of the little angels I've been telling you about. But as Tim Grady said about his funeral, I couldn't have enjoyed it a bit because I wouldn't be about. . . . Fifty thousand rubles!"

An old pot, sailing before the wind, struck the door of the kitchen. Thurland Spillane sprang to his feet. With three great strides he reached the hasp and flung the door open. The hail struck his face as he stood there peering out into the night. He had thought the noise was

the knocking of the woman he expected. Slowly he shut the door and returned to his chair.

"We got to the house of a friend," said Thurland after a long interval of silence. "I left her there, and I went on to fool the bloodhounds that were following her. And since that night I haven't seen her! Not even a glimpse of her! But there is a link between us. A poor link, but a fine one, *avic machree!* On the back of an old envelope I had scribbled it a year before! The name of this farm, Michael! Ay, ay, my brother! Spillane's Green Tree Farm, on the road from Glengariff to Kenmare, County Kerry, Ireland!

"A little message she sent me. Five words in her own tongue: 'I will go to Ireland.' That was all. '*I will go to Ireland!*' And listen, Michael! Ireland might have known princesses a-plenty from the days of Medb, Queen of Connaught, the daughter of that fine fighter Eochaid Feidlach; but she has never known a princess like the one that is coming across the world to your farm."

IT was my father who roused Thurland Spillane from the strange calm that fell upon him after he had spoken of the beauty of the woman who was heading across Europe for our farm.

"And you, Thurl?" said my father. "How did you get away?"

"Caravan!" snapped Thurland, and the magic juice that came out from that word saturated our brains. . . .

Oh, a fine word is *caravan!* A splendid word. Say it softly to yourself, and you will find it rouses a lot of little dreams that were the dreams of a thousand forefathers. Fine music is in that word. Pictures galore, it paints. Old it is, for one finds it in Genesis, in Job, in Isaiah, and the Psalms. And each time one sees it there rise visions of camels with tassels and bells and trappings, and bearded men and veiled women, and great packs of tapestries and rich silks, of perfumes and precious stones, of dyes and treasure so wonderful that a glimpse of them would catch your throat like the fingers of a strong man.

And you think of cities that are colorful. Cities like Bagdad and Damascus, Samarkand and Babylon—which last means "The Gates of the God," and where old Nebuchadnezzar died in his great palace in the long, long ago.

"By caravan!" repeated Thurland. "Through the Desert of Gobi!"

Of strange things he told us that evening—things that were hard to believe, but which he wrapped in such golden words that we were forced to believe them—words that were like great beads of gorgeous sound strung on a catgut of mystery. Of the curious whispering of the sand which the Mongols believe is made by the ghostly army of Genghis Khan forever roving across the desert.

And he told of the *burans*, the terrible storms that flog the grains of sand at such a speed that they clip the ears of the baby camels! And he spoke of the Temple of Truth that is in the desert, but which is invisible to sinners, so that sometimes whole caravans pass through it—pass through it without being aware that it is there. "Babies see it," said Thurland huskily. "They point at it and gurgle with wonder. . . . Babies, being innocent, can see things that their elders can't."

And he told of the swift horses that are bred near the city of Urga, which is a town in the wastes, and of the manner of their breeding. For according to the story of Thurland, no man has ever seen the stallion that fathers them. The mares are turned out on the sandy stretches, and there they meet a stallion that is invisible. This story my father doubted, but his brother insisted.

"I have seen them," said Thurland. "They could race the head off any horse that ever faced the starter at Leopards-town or the Curragh!"

ON and on went Thurland Spillane, across a world we did not know. And we knew that the woman was not with him. By some other route she was making for our home! For our farm! At times above the noise of the storm we thought we heard her. . . .

Thurland broke from the grip of the Gobi. He crossed the Great Wall of China at a place near Yu-lin, so he said, and then he went down a river called the Hwang-ho, a big river that has hundreds of rafts on it, with people living on them. He came to a port called Hangchow, and there he found a boat whose captain was Irish, and in this boat he worked his passage to London.

"And from London I came hot-foot here," he said. "I thought I'd be late. For she doesn't speak English or Gaelic, and she couldn't explain to you, Michael. And she might be followed. Yes, she will be followed. Devils will trail her wherever she goes."

Thurland Spillane rose and stretched himself. "It is late," he said. "I have kept you out of bed with my story."

It was then that my father asked a question. "And our brother Flane," said my father. "Have you heard from him lately?"

"I have," answered Thurland. "Flane is hunting."

"Hunting what?" asked my father.

"Treasure," said Thurland; "the greatest treasure that the world has known."

"You are joking," said my father.

"Devil a joke," laughed Thurland. "I will tell you of it tomorrow or the next day. All the crocks of gold that are buried in Ireland are nothing to it. Nothing at all. Flane is somewhere in Morocco. The exact spot I don't know. He wrote me months ago. He is searching for a place that would make him the richest man in the world. It is guarded."

"By whom?" asked my father.

Thurland lowered his voice; but I, being nearest to him, heard the words. "By a woman with feet of gold," he said, and saying that, he put his finger on his lips as a sign that he would say no more. And my father, not knowing what to make of the remark, was silent. But he stared at his brother as if he thought him insane.

"If you don't mind, Margaret, I will sleep here in the kitchen," said Thurland.

"There's a good bed in the room beyond the children's chamber," said my mother.

"No," said Thurland. "I want nothing better than this." And with that he laid himself full length on the settle and pulled the great fur coat over his body. His bold eyes were on the door. And the two dogs growled softly as they watched the coat that was made of glorious sable. Wordless, we crept away.

CHAPTER II

THE STRANGE VISITOR

NOT a wink of sleep had I that blessed night. And little had my mother and father, for I heard them whispering in the hours before the dawn, when the wind died down. Thoughts of the lady kept me awake. Somewhere out in the big world a goddess was moving toward our farm, a woman more beautiful than any I had ever seen. For Thurland Spillane, in his strange way, had unloosed shining words that I had rolled in the dream-dust that fills

Walking through the crowded souks of Tlemcen where Moors sat in



the mind of a boy, and I saw her in the darkness of my little room.

Yes, she rose up in the gloom. Fair of skin, for Thurland had told my mother that the lady came from the Province of Perm, where the women have complexions so clear that they look slightly luminous, like the pictures you see of saints that God loved greatly. And her hair, he said, was like the tassels on the ripe corn.

And in answer to a question of my mother's as to how the women of Irkutsk dressed themselves, Thurland had given a reply that brought up before me visions of strange furs and brocades, of damask worked with gold thread, of green velvets that thrilled the fingers that touched them. Of silks the very swish of which made mystery. . . .

Across the world this woman was making for Kerry—for our farm! And: "*She will be followed!*" Thurland had said. "*Devils will trail her!*"

So the night rolled on with endless pictures of her walking through the big towns, asking the way to Kerry. Lispering it curiously because she could not speak English. And I saw the old envelope on which Thurland had written the address. Spillane's Green Tree Farm, on the road from Glengariff to Kenmare, County Kerry, Ireland. . . . Ten thousand farms there were on the sweet face of County Kerry, but it was our farm that had been chosen as the spot on which the little white feet of Romance could rest in comfort.

In the dawn-light I thought I saw her face at the window, pressed to the pane. I sprang from my bed and rushed across the room. There was no one there. The storm of the evening had died down. It was snowing.

Into my feverish brain came a belief that she had arrived in the night and

their little stalls, selling sweets and spices, dried figs and goat's milk.



was at the moment in the kitchen talking to my uncle. I dressed hurriedly and ran along the passage. The creepy feeling was still upon the house. I heard the soft whispering of my mother as I ran by the door of her room.

Thurland was standing at the open door of the kitchen, staring at the white road. Sarsfield and Emmet, still suspicious, were sitting on the flagstones, watching him.

Thurland turned and looked at me, a half-smile on his lean face. "You're up early," he said. "Do you get up at this hour every morning?"

"No," I stammered. "I—I just thought she—she might have come in the night."

For a couple of minutes he did not speak; then he stepped across the kitchen and took my hand. "Jimmy," he said, and his voice ran through me, "Jimmy, we must think her here! Do you understand what I mean? We will just *think*

her to the farm. We, you and I, Jimmy, if we think hard enough about her, might help her to find the way."

"I—I thought that," I stuttered.

"You did, did you?" cried Thurland. "Well, listen to me: I'll hire you at five shillings a day. You know every woman in the countryside, don't you?"

"Yes, uncle," I answered.

"Then here is your work. If you see a strange lady coming along the road, either from Glengariff or Kenmare, rush and tell me. You'll get five shillings a day."

I was delighted. I promised that I would watch faithfully, and a little fearful lest he would change his mind, I buttoned my coat and stepped out to the farm-gate.

"There's no need to stand outside," said Thurland. "You can watch the road from the kitchen. It's too cold outside."

"It's not too cold for me," I said. Five shillings a day was a great deal of money for a young boy to earn, but it wasn't the money that brought the thrills to me.

WAS ever a boy in the history of the world employed on such a wonderful task? Never! The fine mystery of it all—the secrecy that sent shivers all through me! Here was I, a lad on a lonely farm in Ireland, mixed up with an affair that rose up and kicked against the stars. A business that clacked around with feet of steel. A love-child of the Czar! Seven killers laid out in a row like faggots! Fights in the night with Thurland, and the woman running. The Desert of Gobi! The stallion that was invisible who fathered the swift horses! And those whispered words regarding treasure—treasure guarded by a woman with feet of gold. . . .

I hardly dared to blink my eyes as I watched the white road. Dan Kerrigan drove by our farm, but the idiot did not show any surprise as he glanced at the gate. He didn't sense the mystery and glamour that had fallen upon the place. But Dan Kerrigan wasn't all there, so the neighbors said.

My father inquired as to why I was standing around in the cold, and Thurland answered the question. "He's working for me, Michael," said Thurland. "He's my look-out man. Hired him this morning for an indefinite period."

But although Dan Kerrigan saw nothing strange about the farm, the news got out that Thurland the Devil was back in Kerry. Farmers going by stopped and asked questions. Was my Uncle Thurland home? Ah, it was true, then. They had heard that Bill Slavin had brought him out from Kenmare.

Sometimes Thurland spoke to them, and sometimes he didn't. But whether he spoke or not, the feeling of mystery spread out from our farm and across the fields. . . . Mad Thurland Spillane was home—home from the ends of the earth! He was walking up and down the road in front of his brother's farm in a great big coat of fur, one eye on the trail to Glengariff, and one on the route to Kenmare!

Heads were thrust out of farmhouses to colloque with people who drove by in carts. What the devil was he watching for? Ah, glory be to God, who could tell? Wasn't he Thurland the Devil? . . . The police, perhaps? . . . Arrah, an' you've said a fine earful! The peel-

ers it might be. He's killed some one, perchance, an' the police are after him. Is his brother Flane with him? . . . No? Well, that's something to be thankful for. . . .

All that blessed day they came by, their little eyes and their tongues trying to pick reasons out of the head of Thurland. But none dared ask outright why my uncle was walking up and down the road. Not one. For Thurland Spillane had eyes that throttled the questions of the overcurious.

"It's the air of Kerry that you love, surely," observed Willy Flanagan slyly. "I've seen you all the day patrollin' the road like a fox in front of a geese-pen."

"I've been waiting here to tell you something," said Thurland.

"Is that so?" cried Willy Flanagan, pricking up his ears at the thought of being let into the secret. "And what is it you want to tell me, Thurland?"

"To go to hell!" snapped my uncle, and Willy Flanagan was so cowed by the look of Thurland Spillane's eyes that he ran up the road to his own farm. . . .

In the late afternoon my uncle spoke to me. Restless he was as he swept the road with his hawklike eyes. "I have a feeling that she is close, Jimmy," he said. "It is in my bones. But whether she is coming from the direction of Kenmare or Glengariff I don't know. But she is close!"

The same feeling was upon me. The night was coming down, gray and ghostly, and there was fine snow.

Thurland took a shilling from his pocket and tossed it in the air. It came down heads. "Walk toward Glengariff, Jimmy," he said. "I'll go toward Kenmare. I've got a feeling. She's close! *She's close, boy!* Walk a mile or so, then come back here."

I set off in the direction of Glengariff, a thousand thrills racing through my body. For the voice of Thurland had the heart-lifting quality that one might think could come from a silver bugle blown on the highest peak of the Wicklow Hills.

At a quick pace I started; then the hunger to see her got into my legs, and at a trot I passed our boundary fence and ran on up the long sweep of the hill. And the words of Thurland whipped my shins as I ran:

"She's close, boy! She's close!"

NOTHING at all are the words as they are written here, but when Thurland Spillane uttered them, they

were trumpet-calls—something that your ears had waited for, a chord that pierced you like a golden skewer, hurting you, but making you cry with the sweet agony of it. At times, at times in the soft dawn or in the twilight I can hear those words again, and their beauty drips through the air like a wonderful syrup that might be made in some Eastern place that great travelers have only seen from afar. A mighty bond was there between my uncle and the lady, a bond that laughed at Irish miles and Irish moors and bogs.

THE hill rose like the grave of a god, and panting a little, I ran up it. The rim of it, bald and treeless, showed against the sky, the road a mere notch in the line. But as I looked at the notch, I unloosed a cry, and my legs found speed that I never knew they possessed. For the figure of a woman had appeared in the notch! A figure that moved unsteadily, as if dreadfully tired, and even as I ran, I saw her totter and fall!

I flew over the ground. Making queer cries, I dropped on my knees beside her. And my heart came up in my throat and nearly strangled me, and my head was a ball of fire like the bolt that struck the Widow Moran's barn. For it was she!

In that pearly light I saw her face as I pushed back the hood of ermine that covered it. And her beauty thrust me back like a strong hand. Beautiful I had thought many of the pictures of the saints that I had seen, but theirs was a beauty of a dreamy kind—the soft glow of a candle, while hers was a flame.

The climbing of the hill had been too much for her, she having walked fifteen Irish miles from Glengariff, as we later found out. And there she lay in a faint on the road, and the night closing in on us, a mile from our farmhouse.

Frantic with fear was I, fear for her safety. She seemed so soft and fragile to me, so delicate to be cuffed by the wind that blew fiercely on the hilltop. Like a crazy person I babbled to her, screaming of the danger that threatened.

I took hold of her little hands and shook her—shook her gently, for I was afraid of her unnatural beauty. There are strange stories in Ireland about women whose beauty is such that boys and men cannot look at them without coming to harm. And all those stories rose up in my head as I looked at her face, kneeling beside her and holding her hands.

I shook her again, and she opened her eyes and stared at me. Eyes like great

amethysts, they were. Large and soft, and full of a light that flowed out against me, so that I felt it on my face like the warmth of a flame.

She began to speak, but not a word could I understand. Not a single word. And the words I spoke to her were as so much Chinese to her. But I made signs. I pointed down the road in the direction of our farm, and I pointed to the snow that was coming down now in fat flakes. Again I caught hold of her hands and made an effort to lift her.

I pulled her to her knees; then, leaning against my shoulder, she drew herself upright. She was tall and slim, like a young rowan-tree, and the wind pressed against her. I shouted to her to lean against the wind, but she could not understand.

Hanging to each other, we moved down the slope. And I was mumbling prayers as we went. And crying, too. For I was afraid that she could not make the distance to our farm, and the thought of leaving her for a moment was dreadful.

We made a hundred yards with difficulty. She wanted to rest, so I steered her to a bank and made her sit to get her breath. And I chafed her icy hands.

AGAIN I pulled her to her feet. I shouted, but the wind drove my voice back to me. And the road was bare, people fearing another storm like the one that had raged the night before.

She stumbled, and we fell together in the snow. I got her to her knees, but she could not stand upright. The strength of her had gone, and the cold and the wind had pecked at the heart of her so that she had no courage to face it. One of her white hands lifted itself and pushed gently against my cheek. And I understood, for the big eyes talked to me as the hand pushed. She thought that I was putting myself in danger in trying to help her. She wished me to go and leave her, there by the roadside.

I was desperate then. She had closed her eyes, so I was brave enough to clutch her around the waist. Using every ounce of strength, I pulled her to her feet. Putting myself behind her, I pushed her before me, but it was no use. With a little cry of weariness she slipped from me and fell upon her face. And I knew that I would never get her to her feet again. I lacked the strength. Mad was I with the fear. I screamed so loudly that I deafened my own ears to the answering cry that came up the slope.

BUT the second time I heard it—plainly. It was like the cry of some huge animal rushing to protect its young. Again it came, and with it the thunder of feet. Thurland Spillane, a huge shape in the half-darkness, was beside me!

He flung himself on the ground beside her. Queer, blubbling sounds he made as he put his great arms around her—sounds that were thrust out of his lips by the pain and the dread in his heart. Springing up without an effort, her in his arms, he rushed down the slope toward our farmhouse. And I ran at his heels like a small dog at the heels of an elephant.

A little frightening was my uncle as he ran along the road. For the blubbling cries came back to me, and they seemed to belong to a past that was dark and mysterious. For Thurland Spillane was a strong man, with fine, primitive passions, and the soul of him was raked by the happening. No little puny man was Thurland the Devil.

Great strength had Thurland Spillane. At a gallop he covered the mile of road that lay between us and the farm; the woman in his arms seemed no obstacle to his speed. Charging through the farm-gate, he reached the kitchen and sent the door flying open with one kick from his shoe.

On that same settle that he had occupied the night before, he laid the woman, shouting orders to my mother and my father. A madman was he at that moment. He commanded restoratives, hot bottles for her feet, warm blankets to wrap her in. He was beside himself with fear lest the battle with the blast had overcome the strength of her.

My mother brought pillows, and Thurland thrust them beneath the head of the lady. Then with a sweep of his arm he flung back the cloak that he had drawn over her face during the wild rush along the cold road. And we, grouped around the settle, saw her face. We saw her face clear in the light of the lamp.

Now—and of this I am certain—when we looked at that face, we thought we were in some other place than the kitchen of the Green Tree Farm. Or, I should say, that the kitchen was changed for us by the beauty that had come into it, so that it wasn't a kitchen at all. Common things that we had known and touched all our lives took on a sheen and a glory that startled us. And I think that we looked better to each other. I know that

my mother seemed more beautiful to me as she stood beside the settle and stroked the white forehead of the woman that lay there.

Her eyes went from one to the other of us, halting for an instant on the face of each as if to warm us with the spiritual fire that came from them, then swinging suddenly back to the dark, lean face of Thurland, as if afraid he had left the room during the fleeting examination of the rest of us. And it was upon Thurland that they poured their greatest warmth. Upon Mad Thurland Spillane, who was really mad then, chafing her hands and questioning her in her own tongue. A strange tongue, whose queer splutterings added to the mystery and wonder of her arrival.

My mother brought broth, and she drank it, thanking my mother with her eyes. And strength came back to her. She asked for me, and Thurland pushed me forward. In Russian she thanked me, and my uncle translated her words; then, taking my hand, she drew me gently toward her and kissed me on the lips! And I cried with the great joy that came to me. The joy that hurt. For there were no other lips in all the world like hers.

LATER, my mother put her arm round the shoulders of the lady and led her to our best bedroom that had been hurriedly got ready for her.

When she passed out of the room, she left an emptiness behind her, and we were all silent and a little afraid—a little afraid lest she might go out of our lives forever. We sat and watched the door through which she had gone; and the fists of Thurland Spillane were clenched, and his eyes were spiteful with the fire in them. And I remembered his words: "She will be followed!" was what he had said. "Devils will trail her wherever she goes!" And a fear of the countryside was upon me—a fear of sweet Kerry that I loved. Across the hills devils who cut and hacked defenceless people might be walking! In Kerry, with its purple mountains, its quiet lakes, and its little rivers running softly to the sea.

Three tremendous days followed the coming of the lady. Three days from which dropped hours that broke in incense and the stuff of dreams. The farmhouse was gilded with the beauty of her, and she left little drifts of perfume in the rooms through which she walked, perfume that came from the soft body of her. And there was peace on the farm,

for none raised a voice while she was near.

Perhaps it was that I, being young at the time, was impressed unduly by the love that existed between the lady and my uncle Thurland Spillane. It may have been. But this I do know—never have I seen an outward showing of affection that matched theirs. And although it was there, it wasn't there, if you know what I mean. For there was nothing maudlin, no holding of hands or kissing, or whispering in corners. It was just this: The two of them seemed to be walking forward through a meadow of little flowers, and the fragrance of the flowers that they brushed against came to us who watched.

And we heard the little feet of Spring coming over the spears of Macgillcuddy's Reeks, although it was but January. And we were kind and polite to each other. No snarling or snapping. And the two dogs, Sarsfield and Emmet, fawned on the woman and followed her. A strange thing for Emmet, who had all the pride of the big wolfhounds.

The firelight made spells in the evening when Thurland and the lady sat before it—magic spells that enveloped us and brought the outer world to the kitchen, the world across which she had come. The names of misty cities she whispered to Thurland, and Thurland spoke of them to us who sat around. His husky voice mapped out the route she had followed, and we saw her, forever repeating the name of my father's farm in Kerry.

"She came through Omsk and Orenburg," said Thurland, and the names rolled around in the firelight—names that were a little terrifying to our Irish ears. "And from Orenburg she came to Moscow."

Together we breathed the word: "*Moscow!*" A wild name to come into the kitchen. All round us were names that had carried sweetness and faith to the world. Names with a sob in them: Innisfallen, Killarney, Cahirciveen, Tralee, Rathmore, and Valencia itself, from which the great cable leaps into the sea on its way to America. But Moscow had a queer sound to us.

Thurland spoke of it in the colorful way he had of describing places. Thurland had been there, so it seemed from his talk; but secret police had called on him one night and told him they thought the climate too hard for him. And Thurland thought they were right,



"Devils will trail her wherever she goes," my uncle had said.

and packed up without a word of argument.

He built the Kremlin for us with his words; for fine things are words. Paddy Houlihan, the beggar, says that God is forever telling stories to the angels, because wonders that come to you by the ears are greater than those you see with your eyes. And Paddy Houlihan may be right.

"Kovno," said Thurland, and we hopped across cold plains to Kovno, a little fearful that the lady would be caught. For, although we knew that she was sitting there beside us, we were still afraid that she would be caught. The Irish are like that.

"Königsberg, on the Baltic," translated Thurland, "and from Königsberg, on a British ship to Plymouth. Kerry in her heart. Blessed Kerry."

And my father would ask questions galore, for inquisitive was my father about places that were far off. And every question he would ask would bring an answer that sat on the hearth and beckoned to us. For the answers were made of strange towns, and food that we had never heard of, and drinks that were unknown to Ireland. "Drinks that lashed the throat of you," as Thurland put it, when he told my father of vodka. We had never heard of vodka.

THREE days of wonder had we; then came a shock. The dead body of a man was found in a bog between Kenmare and Parknasilla, and the news flew across the countryside. He had evidently walked into the bog in the darkness through ignorance of its whereabouts, and no one had heard his cries for help.

It was Danny Curran who brought the full story to our farm. A fine gossip was Danny, and he loved nothing better than to spread news, his little red eyes watching the effect upon the faces of his audience. And those same red eyes had a fine time when he shouted the details at our farm-gate.

"I have just come from the bog!" yelled Danny, and my father and Thurland Spillane, my mother and the lady stood at the door of the kitchen and listened.

"'Tis a most surprisin' business!" continued Danny. "A most thrillin' business altogether. They've washed the mud off the dead chap, an' they've found out what kind of a man he is. Now could you guess?"

"We couldn't," answered my father.

"He's a Rooshian!" shrieked Danny. "By the Fist of Finn MacCoul, he's a Rooshian! They've found papers on him, an'—*What the devil d'ye mean, you big Rapparee?* Get off the cart, or I'll brain you with the whip!" For Thurland Spillane had made a rush at the cart of Danny Curran, and the wild anger on his face had frightened the news-carrier.

"Get to hell out of here!" cried Thurland. "Get out, or I'll pull the head off your dirty carcase!"

Thurland made a grab at Danny, but Danny whipped up the horse as the big hand of my uncle reached for his neck. Thurland had to leap from the cart as it went rocketing down the road.

Fifty yards away Danny Curran pulled on the reins and turned his head. "It was a Rooshian, you big blackguard!" he shouted. "Whether you like it or not, I'm telling you! He had papers in his pocket, and some sort of money that they call rubles, an' may the devil scald you for makin' a swipe at me for nothing!"

But Thurland was not listening to Danny—for the cry of "Rooshian!" had struck the lady like a fist. She reeled backward, and she would have fallen if my mother had not caught hold of her. Thurland had rushed to her side, and he was speaking to her in her own tongue, comforting her and trying hard to frighten away the fear that had whitened her face. A fine shot of terror had Danny Curran brought to our farm. A fine shot, indeed!

That afternoon I sat in the barn wondering over the news that Danny Curran had brought, when I heard my father and Thurland talking near the door. I sprang up with the idea of letting them

know that I was there, but I had heard too much, and fear pressed me back again onto the straw.

"And is this fellow anything to do with the treasure?" asked my father. "The treasure you spoke of on the night you arrived."

"Not a bit," snapped Thurland. "This spy that the devil has pushed into the bog was sent out after her. The treasure that Flane is hunting for is another matter."

"My head got confused with your stories," said my father. "You spoke of it being guarded by a woman—"

Thurland gave a great laugh, and my father waited. "Listen, Michael," said Thurland, and his husky voice thrust the fine mystery into his words and brought to one's ears the belief that only the words of the Scripture possess. "There's a treasure hidden in northern Africa that would startle the blessed angels in heaven if they saw it. And to them, gold is as common as turf, for 'tis said that they walk on it year after year. But this is different. Mother o' God, yes! I'll tell you of it."

I COULDN'T move now, the voice of Thurland holding me down upon the straw. His words made my head go round and round. My throat got dry and my mouth opened so that I could not close it. A lust for that hidden plunder had come upon him, so that my father, under the torrent of splendid words that came from Thurland, made gurgling noises that frightened me.

They were not exactly words that Thurland used. They were great lengths of color that ran in on the listening ears like a river of gold. Magic phrases that were the litany to the god of avarice. A litany to Satan himself!

Thurland spoke of plunder—plunder that had been gathered together through untold centuries, that had been fattened by raids and murders and unholy doings till it became a bloody legacy of Mahound. Scraped together by the great claws of Satan, that used men in collecting it the way a farmer would use a rake.

My heart pounded madly as the story roared over me. And roared is the word. For it seemed as if it was something that I could feel and see, as well as hear, something that was driven through the barn by a great wind. The wind of desire, of greed, and of covetousness that is the breath of the devil.

And names came into it that I had never heard before. Names of places and men, frightening names. "There at Jebel Zabara, Michael, were the great mines of the Queen of Egypt!" cried Thurland. "There she got all her jewels! Diamonds, and amethysts, and rubies, and sapphires, and emeralds. Emeralds as green as the fields in springtime and as big as a baby's fist! It is of the great Cleopatra I'm speaking."

WHEN Thurland paused for breath, I could hear the excited tones of my father, who was enchanted by the story. And well he might be. For no tale of treasure had ever been told in Ireland like that told by my uncle.

Thurland spoke the names of men: conquerors, raiders, murderers—strange names. All acting for Satan, all fattening the treasure that was now so big that whispers of it went out into the world. Men sang of it—songs that were written by great bards who had plaited into the words the swish of the swinging blade, the groans of the dying and the clash of the short-handled ax on the shields of brass.

But it was when Thurland spoke of the Masque of Death that I became afraid. I had a desire to cry out, asking him to stop. And yet, with the terrible fear that was on me, was a longing to hear, a longing that dried my tongue so that I could not cry out.

"The Masque of Death," said my uncle, "has been a tormenting dream for a thousand years. Will I tell you of it, Michael?"

"Do," said my father. "Go on. It's a wild tale you're telling, but I'll listen."

It was then that Thurland unbosomed himself. And his words made pictures that flashed up before my eyes: Pictures of charging hosts and thundering squadrons, of swinging axes and flashing swords, of spears and crashing shields. Across the north of Africa moved the battle-scenes: Abyssinia, Egypt, Numidia, and the great deserts stretching to the Atlantic. And in the center of every murderous group that slashed and killed was the Masque of Death, and wherever it was, victory marched with it. And this was the law.

"FOR whoever has it, rules!" cried Thurland. "They say the great Genghis Khan once owned it, and Darius had it for a time, and Hannibal grabbed it, but it was stolen from him. There are

a million stories concerning it. Myself I have listened to them from the banks of the Niger to Archangel, and from Bagdad to Agadir; great stories, Michael! And it's lost. Lost with a thousand other fine things that were once lying around loose, so that strong men could pick them up and walk away with them—strong men that had courage. Cunning devils have planted them somewhere, planted them the way fat rich men plant things in banks so that no one can get at them. A curse on the banks, say I."

"They're handy," said Father quietly. "For cowards," snapped Thurland. "A great day it was when men had the strength to protect what they owned. It's this hiding and planting that annoys me. Some little wretch sticks a thing like the Masque of Death into a hole or a corner, and he's killed or dies, and the thing is lost. Is that right, I ask you? Is it right?"

"I don't know," answered my father. Then, after a pause he asked: "Do you think Flane will find it?"

"Flane is trying," said Thurland. "Myself, I have been occupied with other affairs of which I have told you, but now that everything is settled, I am going to join Flane. A wise woman at El Kantara told me that I would die with the Masque of Death in my hand, and I'm damned if she knew I was hunting for it when she made the prophecy."

"There are women like that," said my father simply. "Well, I must go now and get the cows together. I hope you get the treasure, Thurl; but what the devil you would do with all the money I don't know."

"I'd buy the biggest castle in the country," said Thurland, "and I'd have servants and fine clothes, and harpers, and I'd breed horses that I'd take over to England and win all the big races like the Grand National and the Derby; and the King would want to see me, and I'd tell him that the people around here used to call me Mad Thurland Spillane or Thurland the Devil when I was out of hearing of their biting tongues, damn them!"

My father laughed; then I heard their footsteps as they walked out of the barn, leaving me with the blood pounding in my head and my nerves quivering as I thought of Thurland's story. . . .

It was in the late afternoon of the day following that on which I had listened to the fine story of hidden treasure that



Suddenly Thurland sprang in like a wolfhound, and he unloosed an Irish war-cry as he sprang. His hands clashed — and the throat of the big man was inside them!

Thurland, with much coaxing, urged the lady to walk through the lower fields. Arm in arm, he tall and strong as any man in Ireland, she slim and supple like the young rowan-tree. I watched them walk across the oat-field and disappear in a patch of trees beyond. Fine and splendid they looked together. For a brave-looking man was my uncle; and Grainne, the king's daughter, was not as beautiful as the lady at his side.

It was near dusk when there came to me a desire to walk across the field and meet them on their way back to our farmhouse. A hunger to be with them was upon me. For their love for each other made the world beautiful.

I came to the edge of the clump of

young chestnut-trees into which I had seen them go. A little path led through the trees, and this path I followed. I thought I would find them at the old mill beyond the wood, where the whole beauty of the Valley of the Sheen lies before you.

It was silent in the trees. A little fearful, I followed the path. The story that Danny Curran had brought to our farm had upset me greatly. A dead Russian, with papers and rubles in his pocket. A Russian in Kerry! On the Kenmare and Parknasilla road!

I WAS near the center of the clump when I halted; my heart leaped up and jammed itself in my throat like a

glass-stopper in a lemonade-bottle. For there came to my ears the sound of labored breathing, the quick intake and out-thrust of breath, the dreadful swish of bodies in combat, and the thud of blows. And in the soft gloom of the place the noises were so frightening that I was gooseflesh from the top of my head to the soles of my feet.

I dropped on my knees and crawled forward. In the cleared space in the very middle of the chestnut clump, two men were struggling. Two men fighting like madmen, and as I looked at them my eyes bulged. For one of the two was a head taller than the other, and the smaller was my own uncle, Thurland Spillane! And Thurland Spillane was taller and stronger than any other man in the County of Kerry!

Dwarfed he was by the man he fought. A head over him, and a back that was inches broader. A very bear of a chap who, although huge, had the action of a young Kerry bull in him as he fought.

Since that day I have seen fights aplenty, in Ireland and Africa and other places; but I have never seen a fight like the one in the chestnut clump. Never. For the big man was fighting with his great hands open, hoping, so it seemed to me, to get the neck of Thurland Spillane in the clutch of his great paws, and my uncle was doing the very same! Hands open, and fingers aching for the throat.

Watching the two, the gooseflesh rose on me like little hillocks, for into my head sprang the story that Thurland had told on the night he came home. The story of how he choked the seven men who followed himself and the lady. The big brute who fought him was a friend of those seven killers, and he had followed Thurland to do to him what he had done to his pals. And Thurland Spillane, who was an Irish gentleman, was fighting him in the way he desired to fight. Obliging was my uncle, and if a man wanted to end a feud by battling with his fists or with blackthorns, it was all the same to him. It's the habit of Kerry to let the fellow that is maddest pick his weapon.

Like wrestlers they circled each other when they broke apart, but when they rushed together again, it was the throat of each other they made for. A battle of stranglers it was, and on that account there was more creepiness in it than any other kind of a fight you could think of. Two great snakes might have battled like these two. No blows at all, but the

groping hands that sought to crush the life out of the other.

Mumbling prayers, I crouched and watched them. Little prayers for Thurland Spillane. Crawling forward on my stomach to see them when they were hidden by the trees, my lips calling on the calendar of the saints to trip up the big stranger. For Thurland Spillane was my god.

I must have mumbled the prayers aloud. I must have. For fingers that were soft and sweet and full of magic touched my neck and clung to the collar of my jacket. She was there! There in the underbrush. Softly she drew me toward her, and that luminous quality of her face startled me as I looked at her. In the gloom it was alight—alight with love and fear and hope. And her lips were moving too: moving in prayer.

Terrible were the sounds they made. Sounds that are not like any other noises in the world. No little words can reproduce them, for the ears that listen to men fighting are held open by the plugs of terror, and they catch tiny nuances that cannot be duplicated. So the lady and I listened to a continuous stream of little sounds that were made by body meeting body, big hands slipping when a grip had been broken, the slither of feet on the turf.

HOLDING his own was Thurland, but holding it with difficulty. The big man was pushing him hard, tiring him with his attacks. Again and again, and yet again, he rushed my uncle, the hungry hands of him clawing for the throat of Thurland.

Suddenly the soft arm that was around my shoulders tightened. Thurland Spillane had sprung like a wolfhound. Swift and frightening was the jump he made, and he unloosed an Irish war-cry as he sprang. His hands clashed like a steel trap, and the throat of the big man was inside them!

The giant knew his danger. There was cold death in those fingers of Thurland Spillane. They whispered of the tomb as they made a belt of steel around the big throat.

Like a hound Thurland clung to him. For the giant was strong. He shook himself so that he lifted my uncle from the ground with his effort, and the big body of him writhed. He dropped to his knees, Thurland on top of him. He fell backward, the hands of my uncle squeezing, squeezing the life-breath out of him.

Thurland Spillane picked himself up and called softly to the lady. Clinging to me, she moved toward him. It was so dark now that my uncle did not see me for a few seconds, and he seemed surprised when he found me pressing against her soft dress.

"Jimmy," he said, "is there any place around here where we could get a car to take us to Kenmare? We must get away at once!"

"Willy Hagerty has a car," I answered. "He wants a good price for—"

"Price is nothing!" snapped Thurland. "Come with us."

We hurried through the wood and the lower field to the main road, Thurland speaking rapidly to the lady in her own tongue. Not a word could I understand, but I knew well that he was telling her that a change of residence was what they wanted most at that moment. And as I ran beside them, I thought of the big giant that we had left stretched out on the little clearing in the wood.

We came to Willy Hagerty's place, and Willy said he would take Thurland and the lady to Kenmare at once. He had the car all ready.

Thurland shook hands with me and whispered a message to my father and mother. "Tell them everything, Jimmy," he said. "I'm sorry, but we must go without losing a minute."

It was then that the lady kissed me for the second time—kissed me with warm lips that were curiously alive: lips that seemed to find the very soul of me and caress it in the instant that they were upon my face. And while I stood, stunned and horrified at the thought of her going from us, the car moved off down the road to Kenmare.

I found my father in the farmyard, and told him everything.

"Is the strange man dead?" asked my father.

"He looked dead," I cried. "Uncle thinks he is dead!"

My father got a lantern, and with me at his heels he ran across the oat-field to the chestnut clump. Dreadful was the silence of the place. Along the little path went my father, the light of the lantern hopping on the trunks of the trees and hopping off again.

We came to the clearing. My father halted and lifted the lantern high. There was no one there! No person at all!

There on the turf we saw the marks of the great battle between Thurland

Spillane and the giant. It looked as if two bulls had battled. My father stooped and picked up a gold coin that had fallen from the pocket of the stranger. It was a Russian coin, as we later found out. But the Russian himself had gone.

"And they've left in Willy Hagerty's car?" said my father, turning to me, and there was a sorrow in his voice that I had never noticed before.

"In Willy Hagerty's car," I said.

"Then there is no way of telling him that he didn't kill the man!" cried my father. "No way at all!"

Then my father did a strange thing: he put the lantern on the ground, and he covered his face with his hands. "We'll never see him again," he said. "We'll never know—"

He stopped and looked at me, and something on my face told him that I knew of the treasure. He came closer and put his hand on my shoulder. "Were you listening?" he asked.

"Yes," I answered. "I was sitting on the hay, and I was afraid to speak after Uncle started to tell you."

"We'll never know," said my father.

"We will! We will!" I cried.

"Why do you say that?" he demanded.

"Because," I blubbered, "because she knows—she knows that if I don't see her again, I'll die!"

My father stared at me for a full minute; then he picked up the lantern and started back for the farmhouse. And through the soft night I swam after him. Yes, *swam* is the word. For the great world was calling to me. The world in which my two uncles, Thurland and Flane Spillane, went up and down and hither and thither, meeting life that was fine and colorful and thrilling.

Just beyond our farm that world was waiting for me. A huge place of wonder with tints on it like those you find on the throat of a pigeon, tints made by cities and villages, and the whole of it, like Thurland's story, pushed along by a mighty wind. So it seemed to me.

At our gate the dog Emmet was howling. He knew that the lady had gone.

CHAPTER III

THE MOTHER WHO FORGOT

A DREADFUL loneliness settled down on our farm after the departure of Thurland and the lady—a loneliness that went from room to room like a wailing

cat, bringing coldness and gloom to everyone in the place.

We spoke of the Russian lady as "she," not being able to pronounce her name. My father would pause with the fork halfway to his mouth and say, "This is a dish she would like," and my mother would wipe her eyes with the corner of her apron and murmur: "She told Thurl in her own tongue to tell me that she liked it."

And it was so with every little thing about the house. If the weather was fine, we would say to one another, "This is a day she would have liked;" and if it was raining, some one would surely remark: "She liked the turf fire, it being new and strange to her." And sad we were as we spoke of her.

Once only my father spoke to me of the treasure story. We were together in the lower field when he turned on me suddenly and said: "If I were you, I would put that tale of your Uncle Thurland's out of your head."

I didn't answer, not liking to say that it was impossible to put the story out of my mind. My father said sharply: "Did you hear what I said? It's a mad bit of stuff that Thurl has collected here and there, and it will do you no good to be chewing it to yourself. And that's the last time I'm going to speak about it."

But the story had taken possession of me. It throbbed within my brain. In the long nights it roused me from sleep, and in the darkness I saw the things of which Thurland had spoken, saw the treasure that had been gathered from the ends of the earth: the splendid gems that had been torn from the crowns of kings and emperors; the great diamonds that Thurland said had been smuggled up the black gut of Africa in the sweaty hands of natives who had grabbed them before the white men had seen them; and night after night, floating in the gloom of my little chamber, was the Masque of Death that inspired terror. . . .

On the farm next to my father's was a man named John Trench who lived there with his sister. John Trench was a hero: He had lost his sight at sea, when he, working as an oiler on a great steamer, went back through a wall of flame to rescue the chief engineer, who had been cut off by an explosion. The English company that owned the ship gave him a pension of a pound a week, and he sat all day in the sun dreaming of places that he had seen. Often I would go over and speak to John Trench,

his stories of places that were out in the world being pleasant to listen to.

One day John Trench spoke to me of the dreams of boys. "There are scores of angels in heaven who do nothing but write down the dreams of boys," he said. "Do you know why, Jimmy?"

"I don't," I answered.

"So that the dear Lord can read them," said John Trench solemnly. "For you see, Jimmy, the Lord was never young. He was always grown-up and wise and powerful. So what the angels write down are God's novels—and there's nothing impious in my saying that."

I was silent, and John Trench went on speaking in the strange soft voice that had come on him with his blindness.

"YES, the fine dreams of boys," he murmured. "Dreams of gallant battles fought all around the world, battles in which they licked all the foes of their country. And they see themselves as great admirals, like Sir Francis Drake, coming home from far-off places with the holds of their ships filled with jewels and gold. Ay, like Rodney, and Frobisher, and the Lord Howard. Chasing Spaniards and other foreigners who dared to finger their noses at England and Ireland. Or maybe they think of themselves as pirates. For all boys love pirates—unless they're boys that are growing up to be parsons. For there's fine romance in the stories of pirates. Sir Harry Morgan was a knight, and he treated ladies with a lot of politeness. And Dick Turpin and Claude Duval were romantic fellows. It's not wrong to dream dreams of them."

"I—I dream of treasure," I stammered, when John Trench turned his sightless eyes in my direction.

"Treasure is the devil's trap," said John Trench. "It's Satan's bait. He hangs it the way you'd hang a raw carrot in front of the nose of a donkey; and before you know where you are he has got you bogged. If I were you, Jimmy, I'd put dreams of treasure out of my head."

"I can't," I said.

"You've seen the two Macrooms sitting at the door of their cottage?" asked John Trench.

"Yes," I answered. "Mr. Jack and Mr. Jim Macroom."

"Do you know why they sit there all day like two big ugly wolfhounds?"

"No," I replied.

"It was a love of treasure that brought them to the state they're in now," said



Out of the big oil-jars peeped men like those in pictures of the Forty Thieves.

John Trench. "They fell into the trap that the Old Boy set for them. Old Nick got the pair of them. Listen, and I'll tell you: When I was a boy, the two Macrooms lived with their old widowed mother in that cottage. They were big lumbering fellows with dark faces and black hair. Their hair is white now, I'll wager. It's thirty-five years back that I'm talking of. Is their hair white?"

"Yes," I answered. "It is very white."

"The Macrooms dreamed of treasure," said John Trench. "They heard of gold mines in Australia where men dug up lumps of gold as big as a five-gallon pot, and they scrimped and saved to get their fares to Melbourne. And the Widow Macroom wept when she saw them counting the shillings.

"Well, there came a day when the Macroom boys counted their savings and found that they had enough to reach Australia. I was a little gossoon at the time, but I well remember the day. Not a tear did they shed as they marched away from the little thatched cottage, but the weeping of the Widow Macroom could be heard from one end of the village to the other. And neighbors cried too, for the Irish are soft-hearted people. Yes, everyone cried except Jack and Jim, for in their eyes were the devilish lights of greed. They were dreaming of treasure.

"But the Macroom boys were not listening to farewells of their sobbing friends. Bold and silent they went off on their journey to Dublin, where they'd take the boat for Liverpool to get the big steamer to Australia. And a long, long journey it was in those days.

"There came two letters from the Macroom boys. One was from Liverpool. The second letter came months after from Australia, and it read: 'We're here in the finest country in the world, and we'll make slathers of money.'

"And after those two letters, never a word more came for the Widow Macroom.

"Four years and more passed away, and then on a bright day in early spring a curious thing happened to the Widow Macroom. She had a lapse of memory. She forgot that she ever had children. All the memories of Jack and Jim, memories that scorched the heart of her, were wiped out in an instant.

"Now there were two explanations given for this. The doctor, the priest, the parson, and a few more of the learned folk of the town called this loss of memory by a long name that I can't remember just now. They said it struck old people like the Widow Macroom; but against this statement of the educated people was the explanation given by Bridget Gogarty. And the village believed Bridget. They did.

"AND this was the tale that Bridget Gogarty told, and I heard her myself when she told it in Milligan's shop. Bridget said that she was sitting with the Widow Macroom, who was churning cream in an open wooden churn before the door of her cottage. The widow was talking of her boys in Australia, when into the open churn flew something that was as full of color as the stained glass window of St. Columb's church.

"The Widow Macroom, thinking it a fine shiny butterfly that the spring had

brought, stopped churning, picked the little thing up by the wings and placed it on the top of the churn. Then she and Bridget Gogarty stared at it, their eyes big with wonder at what they saw. For there before them, her beautiful wings all covered with sweet cream, was the smallest fairy that they had ever heard of! The Widow Macroom gave a cry of astonishment and reached for a little lace handkerchief that she always carried in the bosom of her dress.

"Very gently she wiped the cream from the wings of the little creature who turned herself round and round on the lid of the churn, looking pleased at the kindness that was being shown to her.

"WHEN the fairy was nice and dry, she looked at the Widow Macroom and spoke softly in Gaelic. 'Thank you kindly, Mother,' she said. 'It was stupid of me to fly into your cream, but the bright sun got into my eyes and I could not see.'

"'It was my fault in having the lid off the churn,' said the Widow Macroom. 'I do be forgetful because I'm always thinking of my two boys who are in Australia and who do not write.'

"'Why don't you forget them?' asked the fairy.

"'Oh, I can't,' sobbed the Widow Macroom. 'The old heart of me is skewered with darts of pain.'

"The fairy, so Bridget Gogarty said, and all the world believed what Bridget said, moved her wonderful wings and rose from the churn lid. She flew slowly before the face of the Widow Macroom and passed the tiniest little hand before the old blue eyes in which the lights of pain burned always, and spoke softly in Gaelic so that Bridget Gogarty heard her distinctly. 'It is sweet to forget, little mother,' she whispered. 'No children had you, *avouerneen*. Never a one! Think of sunlight and flowers, of the dew on the maythorn and the thrush in the sky, but of Jimmy and Johnny have never a thought.' And then she flew quickly up into the sunshine, leaving Bridget Gogarty and the Widow Macroom sitting on the step of the cottage.

"Whether Bridget Gogarty's tale was right or wrong is of no matter. The fact that was made plain to everyone in the village was that the Widow Macroom thought herself a childless person. Not a word about Jack or Jim did she utter. The sorrow that was upon her face was wiped away, and she sang all day.

"FOR five years the Widow Macroom never mentioned her two boys. Then on a day in summer, the Macroom boys came home! Ay, home from Australia!

"Big and black and bold as they left the village nine years before, but dressed now like city aldermen with great gold chains across their stomachs and fine glossy hats on their heads. And canes with fat gold knobs on them, by your leave! And shoes that were made of shiny leather that you didn't have to polish at all! And gloves, bless you!

"And they had three great trunks, the like of which were never seen in the countryside. And they had the manner of lords as they ordered the two drivers of the jaunting cars that brought them to the village. 'For the time being,' said Jack Macroom, 'you can take us to our mother's house—and tomorrow we will make other arrangements.'

"Leaving all the fine leather bags in the jaunting cars, each bag carrying the letters *J. M.* in silver, the two Macrooms climbed down into the street, and behind them trooped the whole village.

"Straight for the swinging gate marched the two Macrooms. Jim pushed it open with his walking-stick, and the two marched into the wee garden where they had played as children. Together they stepped forward to the old woman watching them. 'Hello, Mother!' they said. 'We have come home.'

"And who are you?' said she, quietly, looking from one to the other.

"We are your sons,' said Jack, his black face growing blacker at the reception he was getting with all the people of the village looking on. 'We are Jack and Jim,' said he.

"I have no children,' said the Widow Macroom, and although she spoke softly, her whisper went out to the very edge of the crowd, so still were the people. 'I have no sons,' she went on. 'I am a childless woman, and I don't know you.'

"THEN looking down she saw that the shoes of Jack Macroom were tramping on the baby cabbages she was transplanting. 'By your leave,' she cried, touching the creased trousers of him with the dirty dibber, 'will you keep your big feet off my little plants? And will you get out of my garden and leave me alone? What is the meanin' of all this anyhow? Two great idiots that I have never seen in my life are trampin' down my cabbages, and the whole village is here to stare and laugh at them.'

"The two jaunting cars came clattering up with the luggage at that moment.

"An' where will you have it, Your Honors?' cried one of the drivers. 'Will we drop it here?'

"Jim Macroom looked at his brother, and Jack spoke. 'Take it to Hogan's public house!' he cried.

"So Jim and Jack stayed on at the public house, and every morning, with their fine clothes pressed and brushed, they would prance by the Widow Macroom's cottage. For two months they did their daily promenade before the home of the mother who had forgotten them; then the Widow Macroom fell sick—sick unto death. On a bright Sunday morning, Father Houlahan called on the two Macroom boys as they sat in the bar of Hogan's public house. 'Your mother, Jim and Jack,' said the priest, 'is within a day of heaven.'

"A curse is on us!' cried Jim Macroom, lifting up his voice so that all the people in the public house heard him. 'It's the curse of money!' he cried. 'God help us! I want my mother to talk to me before she dies! I want her to know me! I want her to say *Shamus avourneen*, as she did when I was a little gossoon!' And he fell to sobbing.

"IT was then an amazing thing happened. The beggar, Paddy Grogan, who was sitting in the darkest corner of the bar-room, got up and spoke—as if the spirit of prophecy had come upon him. 'Get rid of your pride and your treasure!' he shouted, and his words went out into the quiet street. 'Throw off your pomp and your pride, and your old mother will know you! Two big bold devils have you been with your money-making and your capering, but the Almighty has put His finger in the eyes of both of you! Throw away your gold and your grandeur, and go to the mother that nursed you! Go quick, for her hour has come!'

"The Macrooms did as the beggar instructed them. Never was such a sight seen in the village. Nor in the whole of Ireland, either. The two big men rushed from the public house, and as they ran out onto the street, they threw away their big shiny hats and their gold-knobbed sticks! Their watches and chains went into the dust of the roadway where the beggars and gossoons fought for them till the big chains were broken.

"The door of the cottage was open; and those that had strength to keep up

with the two sons saw the blessed miracle. For the Widow Macroom, with the hand of death upon her, saw the two boys as they came stumbling through the door, saw them and recognized them as her sons—the boys she had mothered and nursed and longed for during the years that they had been away!

"SHE put out her arms to them as they fell on their knees at her bedside. 'Ah, my little *Shawn* and my little *Shamus* avourneen!' she whispered. 'My wee little babies that I love! Don't cry, my little ones! You have come in time to see your old mother before she goes. Ah, *Shamus*, sweet one! I was afraid I'd die before seeing you. I thought the big ship would not bring you back to me in time. And, *Johnny avick*, how big you've grown. Fine big men you have become in Australia, but to me you have always been my wee little babies that swung on the gate. God is merciful to bring you back in time. Straight up from Cork the Almighty speeded you, I wager. Kiss me, both of you. My blessing is on you both. Good-by.'"

John Trench, as he finished speaking, turned his head quickly, in the manner that he had, as if he could see the person he was speaking to.

"Have you seen them lately, Jimmy?" he asked.

"I saw them yesterday," I said. "They were sitting one on each side of the door, silent-like. Staring at nothing."

"They're staring at their miserable souls! Every man and boy in the world has a right to a fair wage, but when they go out like madmen to scoop up treasure and break a mother's heart while they're doing it, the dear Lord in heaven is watching. Put treasure out of your head, Jimmy, lest something might happen to you like that which happened to the two bold Macrooms."

CHAPTER IV

THE CALL OF AFRICA

BUT all that John Trench could say would not keep Thurland's story out of my mind. For the black hand of Africa reached up to Ireland and thrust things into my brain.

There is a strange glamour about the name of Africa. A great booming name it is, for sure. It is the male of the Continents. Europe is feminine; so is America; and so is Australia. Asia is of

doubtful sex, but Africa screams its masculinity to the world.

Say it softly—lisp it even—it is forever fear-producing, frightening; a sort of an abracadabra of terror. For when your lips whisper the word, pictures rise before the mind—pictures of dark doings in the jungle, with the beating of tom-toms, the caperings of witch doctors, and all the wild doings that go with the worship of gods made of wood and stone.

There came a letter from Thurland to my father. Six months to a day after 'e had left our farm it came. An envelope of a strange green tint with stamps that we had never seen before. On the stamps was a tower that ran up into a hot sky.

Thurland was at a place called Tlemcen, in Algeria. He was there with the Russian lady and Flane, my other uncle.

My father read the letter aloud, and we listened, eyes wide, our ears hungry for every word. It was a mad, disjointed letter, for Thurland wrote in the same way that 'he talked, jumping from one place to another in a way that confused and troubled us. But to me every sentence was a brushful of color that made Africa plain to me.

Thurland had come there from Oran. By Sidi Bel-Abbès, the headquarters of the Foreign Legion. "As fine a bunch of fighting devils and cutthroats as the world ever saw, Michael," he wrote. "Fellows that had the hangman's rope around their necks in their own country, and dodged just as the knot was being tightened. They are here, thousands of them, the Army of the Damned."

"God have mercy on us!" murmured my mother. "What a place for Thurland and her to be in!"

"Don't you worry about Uncle Thurland," I said, and my father looked at me with a friendly grin.

"This place, Tlemcen," continued my father, reading from the letter, "is a town full of Moors, Berbers and black Jews. Not the kind of Jews that you see in Ireland. These are dark-skinned like the boy that Lord Ballyraile brought back from India. And of the women you see nothing except two dark eyes that are deeper than Conlon's Well. Wrapped up like a bale of wool they are, not a bit of them showing except their eyes. The town itself is older than the Round Tower at Glendalough, and it smells like seven devils—smells of rancid oil, of saffron, camel-dung and unwashed humans; I'd give a lot for a whiff of clean air sweeping over the Green Tree Farm."

My father turned to a postscript, opened his mouth, choked back the word that was on the tip of his tongue, then read on in silence. My heart pounded as I watched him; for I guessed what my father was reading. Thurland, knowing my father would read the letter aloud, had put in a private postscript about the treasure! My father was reading of the loot of the centuries that was guarded by the Lady with Feet of Gold.

My sister wished to look at the letter, but my father shook his head. "There are a few words here that I don't wish you to see," he said.

"Can I have the envelope?" I asked.

"You can," said my father, and he looked hard at me as he handed it across the table—looked hard because he saw the hunger that was in my eyes, the hunger to learn if my two uncles were on the track of the Masque and all the wonders of which Thurland had spoken of the day I listened in the barn.

I SLEPT with the envelope beside me on the pillow—the strange green envelope that Thurland said he had bought in the *souk*. And on it, stuck carelessly, the stamp showing the tower shooting up into the hot sky of Africa.

They brought dreams, that envelope and stamp—dreams of Tlemcen. I was walking through the crowded *souks* where the Moors sat cross-legged in their little stalls, selling saffron, and ground-nuts, and sweets and spices, and dates, and dried figs, and goat's milk, and oil. And out of the big oil-jars peeped men like those you see in the pictures of Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves. And the ground-nuts became diamonds as I looked at them, although the Arab who was selling them still thought they were nuts.

And the smells of which Thurland had written came to my nostrils in the dream. The sharp biting smells of Africa that the sun threshes out of the ground. They came to me in my sleep, choking me so that I awoke with a cry of fear.

My father heard me and called from his room. "What's up?" he asked.

"Nothing," I answered.

"Then stop your shouting and go to sleep," he said.

But I was afraid to sleep after that—afraid that I might cry out something that would give my father a clue to the plan that was in my mind. I lay awake till daylight, thinking of Africa. . . .

We were seeding potatoes next day, my father and I. "You wondered what

was in the postscript of your uncle's letter?" he said.

"I knew," I answered. "Uncle Thurland wrote you about the treasure."

"He did," said my father. "He and your Uncle Flane are on a trail that they think might lead to it. They are not sure, though. Don't say anything about this to a soul. If they found it, we would all be rich. I hope he will write soon."

BUT Thurland was not a great correspondent. Long dreary months passed by with no news. My father would watch each day for Tommy Rafferty who brought the letters, but Tommy would shake his head as he went by our farm. And I would fatten the dream by painting pictures of Thurland and Flane and the Russian lady hunting for clues in the desert below Tlemcen—clues that they plucked out of the hot sunshine.

Often my mother would speak of the Russian lady, with a curious wonder-note in her voice. For my mother had thought that there was something unreal about her, something spiritual and verging on the miraculous. Again and again my mother would tell of the meeting between the lady and a black cat that was called Cromwell, who lived under the barn, and who was so wild that no one could get within a hundred yards of him.

On the first day at our farm the lady saw Cromwell peeping out from under the barn, suspicious-like as he always was. She made a strange sound with her lips, and the cat came out and looked at her as if he was astonished. Again she made the sound, and with that, the cat put up his tail and walked toward her. He that had never allowed a soul within yards of him! Purring like the mischief he trotted up to her, and the two of them talked, Cromwell telling her of the rough life that he led, forever fighting with the big gray rats beneath the barn, and she comforting him by queer whispers.

When she walked back to the house, Cromwell came with her; and to the great astonishment of my mother he made himself at home on the hearth, sitting there like an ordinary cat, though he had a thousand scars on him from fights with rats, and had lived all his life under the barn.

"Every time I look at Cromwell, I see her," my mother would murmur; and that was strange, considering the old scarred face of the cat. "See her in all her wild proud beauty that made you think of a moor at sunset."

"What are you crying for?" my father snapped, once when my mother was speaking of her.

"I'm not crying," I stammered, and I ran out of the kitchen, lest my brothers and sisters would see my tears.

There came a second letter from Thurland. At least half the letter was written by Thurland, and the other half by Flane. They were at a place called Fez, in Morocco, and if Tlemcen had appeared marvelous from the description Thurland had given, this city of Fez was a thousand times more wonderful. For the letter brought postcards of Fez. Of the mosques and the *souks* and the great *Kasba des Cherarda*.

"Leave those pictures alone and go about your work," said my father, as I sat staring at the postcards. "You act like a fool when a letter comes from your uncle."

"Let be, Michael," whispered my mother. "Leave him alone."

My mother knew of my dreams. Once I heard her speak to my father when she did not know I overheard. My father was annoyed at the way I had done some small job on the farm, and my mother found excuses for me. "He is not for the farm," she said softly. "It's the way of your two brothers he'll be taking. The world sings to him in the evenings, for I have seen the look in his eyes." My mother was a wise woman.

AND the letter from Fez had borne a special message for me. . . . "Tell Jimmy," Thurland wrote, "that some one already speaks of him with great love and affection. She remembers how he helped her on the Glengariff road."

I should have gone to sleep immediately after saying my prayers that night, but instead, I repeated those words a million times—those words that brought back the memory of her two kisses: the first when she had recovered from her faintness on the day she reached our farm, the second on the evening she left hurriedly after the fight between the giant Russian and my Uncle Thurland.

And Africa came up and snuffed around my bed. The Africa in which my two uncles, Thurland and Flane, were hopping over like two big tomcats on a roof, jumping here and there in a careless fashion. Tlemcen and Fez, and Sidi Bel Abbès, where the Foreign Legion sat in the blazing sunshine cursing peace

and praying for a war that would smother the world in blood. "For fighting is their food and drink," wrote Thurland in his first letter.

The Macrooms were frightening. Those two old men troubled me. Always sitting at their door trying to forget how their lust for gold had made them forgetful of their poor mother.

"Do you know what they're afraid of now, Jimmy?" asked John Trench, one evening as I stopped to speak to him.

"No, I don't," I answered.

"They think the little mother will have forgotten them again when they get to heaven," said John Trench. "You see, she only remembered them for a minute just before she died, and they're wondering now if that little bit of memory will have left her when she gets to the place of glory."

"How do they know they'll get there?" I asked, irritably.

"They have hopes," said John Trench. "They have purged their souls of the gold hunger. Beware of the gold hunger, Jimmy lad. . . . Do you still dream of treasure?"

"Yes," I answered, and I was a trifle angry with John Trench, who, although blind, could see a lot more than persons who had good eyesight.

"The devil is plaiting a snare for your feet, Jimmy," he said gently. "What has it brought your fine uncle, Thurland? What has he got out of—"

I didn't wait to hear any more of John Trench's advice. I was fifteen, and strong for my age. "To hell with the Macrooms!" I muttered as I walked back to the farm. It was spring, and the world was a woman with a veiled face like the women of Tlemcen—veiled except for eyes that were hot and glittering and "deeper than Conlon's Well."

THAT evening when I went to my room I wrote a letter to my mother, telling her what I was sure, however, she already knew; then I made a bundle of my clothes, climbed out of the window and took the road to Kenmare.

There was a whispering wind at my heels, and the road seemed to run with me like a dog going out ahunting. And Spring was so busy that I heard her as I walked. Heard her like a monster midwife that was bringing buds and leaves and flowers into the world with the touch of her hands.

In Africa our eager young son of Ireland finds adventures even more thrilling than those of his dreams. . . . Be sure to read the next installment, in our forthcoming April issue.

Shock Troops of

Like all these stories of the F. B. I. men, "Salome Comes Through" is based on real events—and carries a real punch.

By ROBERT R. MILL

"WHAT else can you tell us about the well near the house? Take your time. But tell us everything you remember, no matter how unimportant you think it is."

The speaker was Inspector Hugh Corey, of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, United States Department of Justice. His manner was calm and deliberate. His voice was just kind enough to assure the person being questioned that all danger was over, but it carried enough firmness to act as a check against the temptation to permit frayed nerves to snap.

Mrs. Louis Goodton relaxed, and summoned all her powers of memory. Ten days ago—it was a horrible nightmare—she had been kidnaped from her suburban home. Her husband, a wealthy manufacturer, had paid a hundred thousand dollars for her safe return. . . .

These men had worked on the case from the start. Until Mrs. Goodton returned to her home, they remained in the background, ever mindful of the admonition of the Director to do nothing to jeopardize the safety of the victim. Now, with that danger removed, they were like hounds straining at the leash.

Mrs. Goodton, a young and attractive brunette, studied their faces and found them attractive. They didn't resemble her idea of policemen. They were the sort of men you might expect to meet in the executive offices at her husband's plant. Their manner toward her had the same deference and assurance as that of her social acquaintances. She felt at ease with them, and what had threatened to be an ordeal was almost enjoyable.

"The well was about fifty feet from the house. I think it was toward the north. There was a walk of rough boards leading to it. The man drew water with a tin bucket tied to a frayed rope."

"That is the sort of thing we want," declared Inspector Corey. "But it isn't

often we get as much to work on. How about it, Tom?"

Agent-in-Charge Thomas Bountey nodded. "Mrs. Goodton is the ideal kidnap victim." There was admiration in his glance. "In more ways than one. This has been so pleasant that I really regret that the time has come for me to go to work. Three of my bright young men are waiting outside, biting their fingers, and all ready to find that hide-out in jig-time. Thanks to you, Mrs. Goodton, it shouldn't be hard."

"One gone," said Inspector Corey, as the agent-in-charge of the nearest field office left the room. "Now, Mrs. Goodton, we have to put this young man to work."

She looked up as a man who had been sitting in the corner of the room approached. He was tall, thin and handsome. His clothes were faultless, and he wore them perfectly. The woman gave a little gasp of surprise. This man a policeman! She endeavored to cover her confusion:

"You are rather cruel, Inspector Corey. First you summon all these attractive men, apparently out of thin air. Then you proceed to send them away. Can't something be done about it?"

INSPECTOR COREY chuckled, then assumed an air of mock severity.

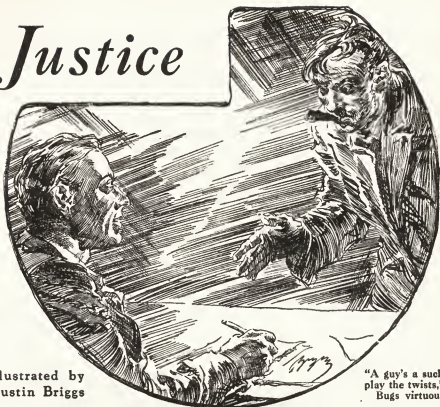
"Mrs. Goodton, you are aiding and abetting your kidnaper. It is up to Special Agent Ashby to catch him. Now he won't want to stir from this house."

Special Agent James Ashby smiled as he slipped into a chair at the table; but the woman, watching him closely, sensed the purpose beneath that smile.

Inspector Corey placed another chair at the table. A man carrying paper and pencils sat down in it.

"Mr. Bruce is an artist," explained Special Agent Ashby.

Justice



Illustrated by
Austin Briggs

"A guy's a sucker to
play the twists," said
Bugs virtuously.

A man with a scholarly face, whose eyes were almost hidden by thick glasses, joined the group.

"Mr. Carl Sherman," Ashby continued. "He is head of our crime laboratory." His smile was contagious. "In Mr. Sherman, you see the brains of the group."

Inspector Corey turned to Mrs. Goodton.

"Feel rested enough to go on?"

She laughed. "I feel quite myself, thanks to you gentlemen. I do appreciate the way you have tried to make me feel at ease. I'll try not to waste any more of your time. Next question, teacher."

"Now we come to the kidnaper," said Inspector Corey. "Describe him, Mrs. Goodton."

She began: "He wasn't very tall." She saw Ashby lean forward. The artist drew a few preliminary lines. Carl Sherman's eyes blinked behind the heavy glasses. "He stood beside me several times, and I noticed that he was only about an inch taller than I am."

"Please stand up, Mrs. Goodton," Carl Sherman made the request. She faced him as she arose.

"I am five feet, four inches," she remarked.

Carl Sherman nodded.

"About five feet, five inches, Bruce."

It was Ashby who held the chair as she sat down. The artist drew preliminary outlines. Mrs. Goodton leaned forward to watch him.

"Please go on," came the soothing voice of Inspector Corey.

"He was quite slender." She pondered. "I don't believe he weighed more than one hundred and thirty pounds."

She watched the artist change the outline a bit to conform.

"I majored in art at college," she volunteered. "Did quite a bit of work from life. I can't come within miles of you, but I can do better on the face with a pencil than I can with words."

The artist smiled as he handed the pencil to her.

"We are lucky again," he declared.

"Don't be too sure," she warned him. "This will be in the rough. The finishing touches come from you." She worked away. "His hair was dark brown, and long and wavy." She surveyed the drawing critically. "No, I didn't get it. Each wave was perfect. Too perfect for a man. Like a permanent wave. Never saw it out of order. Do you get what I mean?"

The artist bent over her and drew a few strokes with practiced hand.

"Better?" he asked.

"You are an artist," was her tribute. She continued to draw. "No, I have made the nose too thick. All his features were small and regular."

Again the artist made a correction. "His mouth was almost a perfect Cupid's bow. Any girl would envy it. His teeth were small and perfect. Not a bad-looking chap; hardly handsome in a masculine way, yet he really wasn't effeminate."

The woman and the artist worked together, exchanging technical terms.

"He wore no coat, and his shirt-sleeves were rolled up. His arms were round and smooth."

SHE hesitated. They waited before asking a leading question, reluctant to break the train of thought.

"I noticed a peculiar thing about his left arm," Mrs. Goodton continued. "Three or four inches above the wrist, there was a band of skin whiter than the other part of the arm."

"How wide was that band?" asked Carl Sherman.

"Two or three inches," she answered. "I think it was too wide for the strap or bracelet of a wristwatch." She gazed at them with inquiry in her eyes. "Don't some men wear a leather brace when they have a weak wrist?"

"They do," Carl Sherman admitted. "You have given us one logical explanation for that white band, and you are a very observant woman, Mrs. Goodton." He examined some notes. "You spoke of the man's long hair. Was it ragged at the back of his neck?"

"No," Mrs. Goodton said, "as I recall, it was very even."

Sherman nodded.

"You spoke of the perfect waves. Therefore I assume that the length of the man's hair did not give him an appearance of faulty grooming?"

The woman waited a full moment before she replied:

"If anything, he was too well groomed."

There was a thoughtful frown on Sherman's face.

"Another thing I noticed," the woman continued, "was the way he walked. He took short steps. I don't walk fast, but he had trouble keeping up with me."

Carl Sherman and Ashby were talking together in low tones, apparently oblivious of her recital. She caught long

and technical words. Her laugh interrupted them.

"I am afraid I haven't been much help to you. And I keep rambling on when you have work to do. Forgive me."

They turned toward her, all courteous attention.

"Thanks to you," Carl Sherman said, "we are like the little boy turned loose in the candy-store: we have so much it is hard to choose. But you have made it possible for Mr. Ashby to know just what he is looking for."

Mrs. Goodton studied the finished drawing.

"Yes," she declared, "that is an excellent likeness. You are a real artist, Mr. Bruce."

Sherman's laugh was a trifle bitter.

"The picture is practically worthless." His uplifted hand stilled their protests. "That fact discredits neither the ability of Mr. Bruce as an artist, nor the soundness of your observations and your gift of expressing them in speech. But when we see this man—if we ever do see him—he won't resemble this drawing in the slightest."

He turned to Ashby.

"You realize what you are up against, Duke?"

The Special Agent smiled.

"Yes, Carl. You won't need me here any longer."

Inspector Corey asked Mrs. Goodton another question. When she looked up, Special Agent Ashby had gone. . . .

They worked slowly, methodically and mechanically. Agent-in-Charge Bountey and his men located the deserted farmhouse. For years it had been used by tramps. Fingerprint experts went over it from basement to roof. They reaped a rich crop of prints,—too many, in fact—but the three million and more sets in the Bureau of Identification in Washington yielded nothing that could be matched up with them.

Carl Sherman nodded. He had expected that. Fingerprints would play no part in this case.

THE routine methods for tracing marked bills with which the ransom had been paid failed to produce any of the money paid by Mr. Goodton.

Special agents carrying copies of the picture drawn by Mrs. Goodton and the artist moved over the countryside. And finally their quest was rewarded. The original of the picture was Kelton Hontal, a youth of twenty-five. He was missing

from his home. His hard-working mother had had her full share of sorrow before this new burden was piled upon her.

It was Carl Sherman, gentle and kind, who questioned her.

Kelton had been a good boy in school. No, he was not fond of sports. He had gone to work as a clerk in a dry-goods store. He didn't like his work. No, he wasn't wild. He didn't drink. There had been no trouble with girls. The conversation veered back to his school-days. There had been nothing to distinguish the youth from his fellows. Yes, he had taken part in one school play. No, his mother didn't remember what the play was, or what rôle her son played. He hadn't said much about it at home. Mrs. Hontal had been too busy to attend the performance.

CROWDS of the curious visited the farmhouse, and one man made a discovery in some bushes near the house: There he found a woman's silk stocking, torn at the heel. He gave it to the police. They in turn, gave it to the special agents.

Carl Sherman took it to Mrs. Goodton. "Yours?" he asked.

Mrs. Goodton gave an exclamation of disdain. She extended one silken leg and held the stocking beside it.

"You flatter me," she murmured ironically. "Do they look alike?"

Carl Sherman's keen eyes twinkled.

"I hardly thought it was yours," he admitted. "Did you see any women at the farmhouse? Did the man talk of any women?"

"The man was the only person I saw," she answered. "He didn't mention anybody else."

Carl Sherman nodded.

Other special agents found the cold trail. Hontal had been in Weston. From there he was traced to Syrport. There the trail ended. Several persons had seen the young man of the picture. But they had no knowledge of his present whereabouts. And the search in neighboring places was without result.

Duke Ashby went by airplane to Syrport.

They had additional material now. The drawing was discarded in favor of a photograph found in the Hontal house. Also, with the hunt centered, at least for the moment, in Syrport, they had a real asset—Bugs Beely.

Mr. Beely, judged by some standards, was not quite bright in certain respects,



In some bushes near the deserted farmhouse a man—one of the visiting curious crowds—found a woman's silk stocking, torn at the heel.

and overly bright in others. This deficiency in gray matter, which had earned his nickname, was an asset rather than a liability.

The underworld, in which Mr. Beely had his habitat, regarded him with affectionate contempt. The police had much the same attitude. All of which worked out to Mr. Beely's advantage.

Bugs was the author of many a crime that the men in blue believed quite above his mentality and ability. He knew enough not to boast. Therefore the underworld shared the belief of the police, and regarded Bugs as a minor crook, harmless and quite safe. That status made it possible for Mr. Beely to collect an assortment of information, and his twisted mentality made him like to be "in on the know."

His first inkling that the information had commercial value came when a keen special agent, attached to the Syrport field office, saw possibilities in Bugs, and cultivated him. Their friendship continued for months before the special agent made his proposition. Mr. Beely's ears went up at the mention of money. He was not hampered by scruples. When the interview ended, Mr. Beely was enrolled as a stool-pigeon, one of a necessary army of similar unfortunates.

SOON after his arrival in Syrport, Duke Ashby called upon Mr. Beely. The usual amenities were exchanged. Then the special agent produced the photograph of Kelton Hontal.

"Ever see that baby?"

"Yep. About a week ago."

"Where?"

The commercial side of Mr. Beely's nature came to the surface.

"How much is he worth?"

Mr. Ashby concealed his dislike for Mr. Beely beneath a smile.

"Plenty, if I land him. Until that time, just chicken-feed for telephone-calls and other necessary expenses. And I don't pay for conversation."

Mr. Beely paid Mr. Ashby the silent tribute that one good business man gives to another. The Special Agent went up several notches in his estimation. He wasn't as soft as he looked.

"I get you," said Bugs. "That baby was in Moe's place about a week ago. I aint seen him since."

Duke Ashby nodded. That checked with other information.

"Good boy," he approved. His manner became confidential. "You haven't seen

him because he knows he is hot, and he has gone some place to cool off." The Special Agent appeared to hesitate, and gazed sharply at Mr. Beely.

Bugs was justly indignant.

"Anything you slips me," he protested, "is tight with me. Youse birds should know that."

Ashby appeared to agree. "That's right," he admitted. "Ever read detective stories, Bugs?"

"Some," Mr. Beely admitted.

"Then you know that the French always hunt a crook by looking for his woman."

Bugs shook his head in agreement.

"A guy is a sucker to play the twists," he said virtuously.

"Exactly," Ashby stated. "We have information that this bird has a twist here in Syrport. She came here about the same time he did. We don't know her name, but she is about five feet, five inches in height, and weighs about one hundred and thirty pounds. She has dark brown hair, and wears it bobbed. Mean anything to you?"

Mr. Beely pondered.

"Not a thing. But I can scout around."

"Do that," Ashby ordered. "This bird knows his ransom money is hot, and has too much brains to try to put it out. That means he is living on what the dame makes. You might give the hot-spots a play. And check the beaneries. Dames like that often get a quick job shooting biscuits. Let me know what you find."

Mr. Beely cleared his throat suggestively.

Ashby checked a smile.

"That will take money, I know." A bill changed hands. "I want a lot of checking for that. And while you are checking, I'll be checking. For your sake, I hope my check shows that you are checking." He paused suggestively. "We don't bother with small stuff like burglary. But as one artist to another, Bugs, that was a neat job out on University Avenue the other night."

Mr. Beely was two shades whiter. He pocketed the bill hastily, and made preparations for a quick departure. This young man, he knew, had been in town just four hours. If that was a sample—

"Me," he declared, "I am busy right now checking."

MEANWHILE, the routine procedure of the man-hunt dragged along. Posters bore the photograph of Kelton Hontal, and offered the usual reward



for information leading to his arrest. There was the usual crop of rumors, all of which were investigated. Judging from those rumors, Mr. Hontal was equipped with seven-league boots, for reports had him in Arizona and Maine on the same night. The usual suspects were picked up, questioned and discharged.

In all the cities of the nation, special agents circulated through the underworld "turning on the heat"—that is, warning the owners of "cooling joints," or hide-aways, that it would not be healthy to harbor Hontal.

Reports had him in Arizona and in Maine on the same night.

The same agents made contact with all their sources of information in the underworld. They drew blanks. Kelton Hontal was not known in the half-world that moves outside the pale of the law. He had made one brief appearance in a resort in Syrport, and then, apparently, had vanished from the face of the earth.

The Director and Carl Sherman went into conference in Washington.

The man who has made the Federal Bureau of Investigation what it is today spoke first:

"The fact that he has no underworld connections cuts our chances in half."

"Yes," Carl Sherman admitted.

"And the other angle takes another twenty per cent from our chances."

"At least that much," the laboratory chief agreed.

"Ever go into that angle very deep, Carl?"

Carl Sherman shook his head with regret.

"Just in a general way. But enough to know that a person of that type who develops criminal tendencies is very dangerous."

"You warned Duke?"

The keen eyes twinkled behind the glasses.

"Yes, Director. He thanked me profusely. Then he told me to drive with extreme care on my return trip to Washington, because there had been a large number of automobile accidents."

They were smiling appreciatively as the conference ended.

BACK in Syrport, Duke Ashby and Mr. Beely met at an appointed rendezvous.

"I gives all the hot-spots a play," Bugs reported. "There is lots of twists, but none that can strictly be called new, most of same having been in circulation since the time when 'Oh, You Beautiful Doll' was a song hit. I spends three-eighty at the Hot Cha, six-thirty-five at the Paradise, and—"

Ashby waved a hand in protest.

"Spare me the painful details. It adds up to the fact that you need more money."

Mr. Beely's face expressed pain at the sordid turn the conversation had taken.

"I wasn't askin' you to put out until you took in what the last ante has brought you."

"Go on," Ashby ordered.

"I buzzes the beaneries, particularly the ones that gets a play from the night-lifers. A twist like what you describes is likely to favor them, it giving her contacts, so to speak."

"That's head-work," Ashby admitted.

"Curley's gets a big play from the wise ones after midnight. They has had a little shake-up there about a week ago on account of the cops claiming the dames there has other talents than wait-

ing on a table, and the manager has hired himself a new night shift. I looks the new crop over with care."

Mr. Beely paused to give emphasis to what was to follow.

"There is about four what comes under the wire as per your specifications. A guy in this town would have a harder time finding a white horse than what he would finding a brunette what measures about five feet five, and what tips the scales at one hundred thirty in her hat and overshoes."

THE Special Agent showed mild signs of annoyance.

"You have a good line of chatter, Bugs, but I don't feel equal to it tonight. Any other facts?"

"I was coming to that," Mr. Beely protested. "Among the steady customers at Curley's is Fifty-per-cent Brodnack. If I had a little hot money on my hands,—I wouldn't, on account of never doing nothing what would cause one of you guys to want to talk to me in a business way,—I would take it to Fifty-per-cent and get a little money what was so cool it wouldn't burn my hands."

Mr. Beely lighted a cigarette.

"Them dames what works at Curley's has all got over believing that Santa Claus is the guy what gives things to working-girls. They knows their way around, and it is a cinch none of them believes Fifty-per-cent made his jack by addressing envelopes at home in his spare time. They know his racket; and if this twist what you is looking for should be there, she would hear about it—you know how twists talk; and she would be in a swell spot to do business with Fifty-per-cent for the boy friend."

Ashby showed more interest. "Very good," he approved.

"That aint all," Mr. Beely continued. "I watches to see which twists hands Fifty-per-cent his soup. All the dames gives him a big play. But two of the four what matches with what you said takes him under their personal wing. I can drop around there with you and put the finger on them for you."

Duke Ashby shook his head.

"No," he ruled. "You keep away from Curley's. You may have something, Bugs. I am inclined to think you do. I'll check it. If it pans out, you are sitting pretty. Meanwhile, here is something on account."

Mr. Beely gasped as he saw the denomination of the bank-note.

"Any time you wants any more checking—" he began; but Duke Ashby waved him away a bit impatiently. . . .

The Director and Carl Sherman were waiting for Ashby when he arrived by airplane. They listened in silence while he told his story.

"I visited the restaurant last night," he continued. "Brodnack was there, at his usual table. I had no trouble spotting the four girls Bugs Beely described. They all check with our description. In fact, I could do a little better, or worse, than Bugs did, and pick out two or three more that might fill the bill."

There was disappointment in his laugh.

"There you are, sir. We may have something. But it is a long chance. Certainly not strong enough to warrant picking up four or five girls on suspicion, with the chance they all are innocent, at least from our standpoint. And if we draw a blank, our bird will be warned and fly. Neither do I consider our case strong enough to warrant putting men on the job checking every one of the possibilities, a job that may take days or weeks."

He made a gesture of impatience.

"At best, it is just a hunch. I happen to think quite a bit of it, because I believe Bugs is a cagey gent, and didn't tell me all he knows. What we need is some way of proving our hunch quickly and painlessly."

A BROAD smile crossed the face of the Director.

"That is easy," he declared. "Let him take Salome, Carl." And he chuckled. "Bright girl, Salome. Turn her loose when all the possibilities are present, and she may turn the trick. Don't you understand?" There was merriment in his eyes. "As a rule, girls don't like Salome. If a certain girl should show no fear or aversion—well, she at least would be worth careful consideration."

Carl Sherman removed his glasses.

"That should do it," he declared; there was mock seriousness in his voice. "Take good care of Salome, Duke. She is a sensitive thing."

Duke Ashby was on his way toward the door.

"I'll grab Salome on my way through," he declared.

The mirth vanished from the eyes of the Director.

"And take Inspector Corey with you when you pull this," he ordered. "It has



"Hontal was plenty scared and not disposed to haggle."

its funny side, but we don't want to interject any tragedy if we can help it."

IT was shortly after midnight when Inspector Corey entered Curley's. He made his way to a table in the center of the restaurant, and took a chair.

"Coffee and doughnuts," he told the waitress.

Corey glanced about him. The place was crowded. Two tables away sat Fifty-per-cent Brodnack. Three waitresses were grouped about him. Mr. Brodnack was supping lightly on a steak, French-fried potatoes and a combination salad. One waitress supplied a second order of bread. Another produced a third pat of butter. The third

girl held reserve supplies in the form of a large piece of apple pie crowned with a huge slab of cheese.

Inspector Corey stiffened to attention as Duke Ashby entered. The Special Agent, clad in rough clothes, and badly in need of a shave, slouched toward one of the least desirable tables, which was only a few feet away from a counter about which the waitresses gathered. Behind that counter white-clad men bent over a steam-table, from which they filled the various orders.

Ashby, apparently slightly under the weather, lurched into a chair, which was the one nearest to the counter. He muttered to himself as he scanned the menu.

"Well?" The voice of the waitress was harsh, and her manner indicated she had little time to waste on this particular customer.

"Ham an' eggs," growled Ashby. "Coffee—black. And haste on the wings of love."

The girl departed with a toss of her head.

Duke Ashby studied the waitresses gathered about the counter. One of those girls might be the one he was seeking. His hunch, which was backed by the importance Bugs Beely had attached to his information, probably was correct. The presence here of Fifty-per-cent Brodnack would act as a magnet. This was the logical explanation of what had happened. Every known fact supported it.

Still playing the part of a bum mildly stewed, he concentrated his gaze on the girls. It was a hopeless task. Their uniforms served to make them appear of one mold. Their smart caps tended to change their normal appearance. Identification was made even more difficult by the fact that in Curley's, make-up was used with profusion rather than with skill.

Peering out of the corner of his eyes, Ashby saw Inspector Corey order a second cup of coffee as an excuse to remain. Fifty-per-cent Brodnack, he noted, had reached the dessert stage, and one of the girls produced another huge piece of pie.

ALL the while, the crowd in the restaurant was growing steadily larger, as late revelers and night-shift workers thronged in hungrily. The clatter of dishes was growing to a crescendo, and the place echoed to human voices as friends called greetings to each other.

Gradually, as the crowd grew larger, more waitresses would assemble at one time before the counter.

Duke Ashby's head was bowed. One hand was in his left coat pocket. He spoke in a low, soothing tone:

"Nice Salome! It won't be long now."

The hands of the clock pointed to one. Inspector Corey stood up, and made his way toward the cashier's desk. There was a line before it. That was good. It gave him an excuse to remain on his feet, waiting for the action that was a matter of minutes now. He kept a wary eye on Fifty-per-cent Brodnack.

Now the waitresses were lined up two-deep before the serving counter. Shrill voices called orders. Gruffer voices repeated them. The cooks and carvers worked furiously, struggling to keep pace with the girls, who darted to and from customers.

DUKE ASHBY removed his left hand from his pocket. Keeping it near the floor, he thrust it toward the serving counter, at the point where the majority of the waitresses were massed.

"Go get her, Salome!" he muttered.

A white, furry object scurried along the floor, continuing in the direction in which it had been started. Duke Ashby sat erect, his muscles tense, his gaze trained toward the serving counter.

A girl screamed. There was a crash as a tray of dishes cascaded to the floor. There were more feminine screams and giggles. There was the swish of starched skirts as the girls fled from the counter.

A shrill cry went up:

"It's a mouse!"

A patron guffawed. Facetious advice came from other customers. A few men made a half-hearted effort to advance toward the scene of the disturbance. Then they fell back, spellbound by the drama that was being enacted before the counter.

One girl had not retreated. She charged toward the white mouse, driving it to a corner. Her foot rained kicks in the direction of the tiny animal. The mouse was in full retreat.

Duke Ashby stood up. There was no hesitation in his movements now. Two strides carried him to the side of the waitress.

"Just a minute!" His voice rang with authority. His hand seized the left arm of the waitress. The fingers of his other hand found the left cuff of her uniform and gave a sharp tug. The cloth material ripped, exposing the bare arm. The Special Agent gave one quick glance. Then he seized the waitress by the collar

and threw her savagely against the counter.

"All right, Hontal!" he growled.

A gun appeared in his other hand. He trained it upon the men who surged toward him with menacing gestures and muttered threats.

"Get back!" he ordered. "United States Department of Justice!"

There was a commotion near the front of the restaurant. Fifty-per-cent Brodnack made an abortive effort to go to the aid of the waitress, then bolted toward the door. Inspector Corey, revolver in hand, stood in his path.

"Just a minute, Brodnack! We want you too!"

Six young men detached themselves from the crowd. Three of them joined Ashby. The others went to the side of Inspector Corey.

The voice of Ashby sounded over the tumult:

"Take it easy, you people. You haven't any sympathy for a kidnaper, have you?"

He bent over, picked up a white mouse cowering in a corner, and placed the animal carefully in his pocket.

"Carl Sherman would never forgive me if I allowed anything to happen to you. Good work, Salome! You surely came through!"

THE DIRECTOR, unruffled by his quick trip by airplane, stood beside Inspector Corey some hours later when the reporters were admitted to the Syrport field office.

"It was very simple, gentlemen," he declared. "Mrs. Goodton told us enough to convince us we were dealing with what is technically called a transvestite." He checked a smile as he saw their confusion. "Transvestitism, in case you are not familiar with it, is the desire of a person of one sex to adopt the dress of the opposite sex."

He waved them to chairs.

"Mrs. Goodton told us the kidnaper's hair looked as if he had been given a permanent wave. His arms were smooth. His mouth was a perfect Cupid's bow. There was a wide white circle on his left arm, obviously where a bracelet had been worn. A woman's stocking, which did not belong to Mrs. Goodton, was found near the hide-out of the kidnaper. All of which pointed to transvestitism.

"We traced Hontal to Syrport. Then he vanished. There was an obvious explanation for that. Hontal was posing as a woman."

He chose his words carefully:

"We received information which led us to believe the person we were seeking was working at Curley's as a waitress. We—"

"'Information' means a stool-pigeon, doesn't it?" demanded a reporter.

The Director faced him frankly.

"I am not going to answer that question. You fight fire with fire. I doubt if any law-enforcement agency relishes the use of what the layman calls stool-pigeons; but any official who refuses to recognize their value is unfit to hold his job."

He swung back to his recital:

"We had no way of identifying the suspect. We were not sure enough to warrant casting suspicion on a lot of persons who might be innocent, and we were afraid to frighten our quarry." A smile played over his face. "We called in Salome. She is a white mouse our laboratory obtained for experiments. She won the hearts of some of our scientists, and since that time she has been an honored guest, rather than a subject for experiment.

"We banked on the old belief that women are afraid of mice. Our transvestite would not share that fear. Special Agent Ashby turned Salome loose among the waitresses. They fled. Hontal tried to kill the mouse. Ashby seized him, tore back his sleeve, and revealed the white mark left by the bracelet on his left wrist. That made our case certain."

He added an afterthought:

"We also picked up one Fifty-per-cent Brodnack. He admitted taking the ransom money from Hontal for half its value. Hontal was plenty scared and not disposed to haggle. Any questions?"

A reporter stepped forward. "Where is Ashby?"

The Director smiled.

"Special Agent Ashby is escorting Salome back to Washington. She is a home-loving soul." He chuckled aloud. "We have to humor her. We might want to use her again."



Another lively story by Robert R. Mill will appear in our next issue.

The

Illustrated by
Jeremy Cannon



Like the twang of a bowstring the Arikara youth uncoiled and struck.

THEY met on the path which led from the Indian village down to the Missouri: Tall Elk's son, a scion of the Arikara, unarmed and unadorned; the Wolf, son of Black Cloud the Crow, fully armed, streaming with feathers and painted in the deadly black of war.

There was room to pass, but neither stepped aside. The son of Tall Elk was trembling with excitement and hot anger, the Wolf toying with a long knife at his belt, and grinning broadly.

"My friend, you leave her alone." This from the son of Tall Elk, bracing himself for the expected assault which did not come. Instead, the Wolf spun the shaft of his club until the polished head glittered in the Dakota sunlight like a thing alive; and he laughed insultingly.

Behind him a line of Indian girls laden with buffalo-paunch water-buckets waited passage to the Arikara stockade, and intently watched the drama on the path above. Melon Blossom was their leader. It was for her the Wolf had waited, because of her that the quarrel had begun.

"My friend, I warn you again: If you would live, you bother her no more."

To the Wolf, the humor in the situation was overpowering. He, a tried warrior of the fighting Crows, upbraided by an untried stripling of that peace-loving race, the Arikara! Baited by a youth who, because of a knee crippled from the fall of a horse, never had killed an enemy, and could not wear a single eagle feather in his headdress as the insignia of manhood.

Ordeal of Tall Elk

A moving and authentic story of old days in Dakota, by the man who wrote "The Last of the Thundering Herd."

By BIGELOW NEAL

Controlling his laughter with a great effort, and raising his voice so that all might hear, he exclaimed:

"What is this, little warrior without a name, fighting-man without a bow or gun? I come here in peace and in friendship, a guest of your tribe. I say to your great chief Son-of-the-Star, and to your people, that Melon Blossom is the most beautiful among your tribe. I say that she is strong and never will be weak, that she is slender and never will be fat; and I honor you and her by offering her a home among the great warrior people, the Crows. And you, the errand-boy of women, tell me to leave her alone!"

A rasping laugh broke from the chest of the Crow. Now the Arikara would bow his head as one ashamed, and retreat as a coward. But instead the youth ceased to tremble, and the Wolf became aware of something unnoticed before. Time had cured the son of Tall Elk's knee, and the unwarriorlike work he had done among the women had developed arms and chest, had covered them with rippling muscles; and now he gathered himself to spring.

Realizing that he had gone too far, the Wolf's hand closed over the shaft of his knife; the blade flashed in the sunlight, but the motion was too slow. Like the twang of a bowstring the Arikara youth uncoiled and struck, with a movement quicker than the play of light on the threatening knife. He lunged forward. Steel fingers closed on the upflung wrist of the Crow. His free hand, clenched into a fist hard as rock, leaped up with terrific force under the warrior's jaw. Caught on the narrow path, with no possibility of retreat, the Wolf was lifted clear off his feet. Turning over in the air, he rolled ingloriously down the face of the hill, his knife and war-club sliding in his wake.

From the line of maidens a chorus of cries arose. Some were cries of lamentation at the fall and disgrace of a hero, for

the lordly manner and bold bearing of the Crow warrior had been not without effect on the hearts of the Arikara women. Others were frankly cheering at the expense of the Crow, and applauding the bravery of the Arikara youth. But worse than either was a peal of laughter which swept along the path as the Wolf, in no danger of serious injury, yet unable to stop his undignified descent, rolled and slid to the foot of the bluff, a tangle of arms and legs, paint and feathers.

AT the bottom, he sprang to his feet. Crazed with anger, he gripped the war-club as it slid to his feet, and it became a whirling, fluttering streak directed at the head of his victorious adversary.

The Arikara stepped aside, and the deadly club spent its force on the bank of clay behind him. He dodged again in time to avoid the flash and whine of the knife. Shaking his clenched fist at the crazed warrior, he cried:

"Bother her again, striped skunk of the Crows, and I will scatter your insides for the food of buzzards, and the weasels can have the—"

Steely fingers closed on his shoulder. He turned to behold the commanding form, to meet the stern gaze of Kah-wah-tsu, the war chief of the Arikara.

"What! Is this the way the Arikara treat a guest from afar?"

Kah-wah-tsu was a great warrior. Before him the son of Tall Elk was abashed and dropped his gaze.

"Who gave you the authority to violate the rules of hospitality?"

"I—he bothers the Melon Woman."

"Has he laid violent hands upon her?"

"No."

"Has he said words that should not have been said?"

"Not that I have heard."

"Has she asked you to protect her?"

The son of Tall Elk hung his head. "Because I have no name, she does not look at me."

"In other words, although you do not own a gun, a horse or a name, you would claim the right to drive better men away from this young woman."

For an instant the shamed gaze of the youth wandered to the girl. He read nothing. Again his head dropped. He made no reply.

The Wolf had climbed the path. With his lips twisted in a snarl, his eyes cold with anger, he moved toward the crest-fallen youth. But before he could raise his hand to strike, those same steely fingers closed on his wrist.

"Peace, my friend: this quarrel is for Son-of-the-Star to decide." And then turning to the son of Tall Elk: "Go to the lodge of the Corn Woman. When the council meets, our grandfather will send for you."

AT twilight the summons came and the Arikara youth threaded his way through schools of playing children and excited dogs to the door of the great dome-shaped structure which was the capitol of the Arikara nation.

A willow fire burned brightly in the center of the floor, its light playing on circular lines of closely packed warriors. Beyond the fire, on a pile of brightly colored blankets, sat Son-of-the-Star, president of the Arikara council and chief justice of the tribe.

Tonight, inasmuch as the Melon Woman and the son of Tall Elk were both orphans and his wards, he was sitting as a judge on a case where he might well be prejudiced. Accordingly his face was stern, with the typical Indian determination to show favor where it would hurt him most.

The hearing was short. The Wolf told his story. He closed by making a formal request of the chieftain for the hand of the Melon Woman. And his was a strong case, because two laws operated in his favor: one the law of hospitality, ever a fetish among the plains Indians; and the other the law which was a part of their religion, that one must never refuse the request of a friend. The Wolf frankly claimed the benefits of both.

On the other hand, when the son of Tall Elk took his turn, his case had little basis in common sense. Presented as he had stated it to Kah-wah-tsu earlier in the day, it savored of officious meddling and jealousy.

When he finished and a judgment was due, Son-of-the-Star held his hands to the fire and washed his face in the

smoke; adjusting the braids of his hair which hung over his breast, he reached for the council pipe. Turning to his left, he looked long at Kah-wah-tsu; but the war chief, seemingly interested in the antics of two spotted puppies playing at his feet, offered no counsel. Turning to his right, the old leader looked at Bear's Paunch, the tribal medicine-man. But he, intently engaged in sorting a collection of snail-shells, deer-feet and snake-rattles, had no suggestion to offer. And so after a long period of meditation, Son-of-the-Star got to his feet.

"My friends," he began, "we are here to learn which of these young men is in the right. The Snake offers many horses for the hand of the Melon Woman, and agrees that she shall not be taken away from us. But love is of the Great One above. No man has the right to decide these things. I leave this case to the hands of our Father above with this judgment: Whichever of these young men shall come before me when next the moon is round on the eastern sky, and shall prove to me that he has done the braver deed, shall have the Melon Woman for his lodge."

TO the son of Tall Elk, the judgment meant the end of a cherished hope. As he walked from the council lodge, he realized fully that in competition with the Wolf, he stood no chance. And yet he knew of times when he had sought out the deepest recesses of the timber and there with borrowed knife, or war-club or bow he had practiced for hours at the warlike exercises of his people. If only there were some way he might turn his industry to account! Halting in the deep shadow of the stockade, he leaned against the wall and tried to think. He had no horse nor weapons with which to sally forth in search of glory; and even had he both, the superior skill of the Wolf would make the contest hopeless.

As he stood, his arms folded on his breast, his head down and his eyes closed, he heard a sound. It was the murmur of softly tanned deer-hide. Opening his eyes, he saw a slender shadow at his side. Before he could speak, he felt a long bundle pressed against him. As he took it in his hands, the shadow merged in the gloom of the stockade.

He passed the guard at the gates of the stockade and struck out onto the prairie. Once beyond the range of human vision, he dropped to his knees and unwrapped the bundle.

By the dim light of the stars he drew out the first object at hand. It proved to be his father's bow. Under it he found a bundle of arrows, and the polished shaft and head of a war-club. Lastly a long knife, keen as a razor.

The heart of the son of Tall Elk pounded loudly against his ribs. Obviously the Melon Woman wished him well. It was clear, too, that she must have learned the judgment of Son-of-the-Star long before it was rendered in public. For when the youth had last seen these weapons, they were covered with dust; the knife was dull, the bow-string hard and brittle. Now they were polished until they shone in the starlight, the knife was sharp and the bowstring was new.

From somewhere within his breast the Indian youth felt the stirring of hope. She would never have given him these things had she not wished him success and success would mean the fruition of his dreams. For a time he knelt under the stars in thought. Then he suddenly rose, turned for a last look at the stockade of his people—and became a shadow moving with no sound save the gentle swish of grass beneath his feet.

Circling the stockade, he slid down the face of the bluff to the edge of the water. There he selected a bull-boat, a saucer-shaped affair of sticks and buffalo hide, and struck boldly out on the bosom of the Missouri. When daylight came, the bull-boat was concealed in a tangle of buffalo-berry bushes on the southern shore, and he was far away among the hills to the south and west.

HE halted finally in a timbered valley. In a thicket of wild plum where he was not likely to be disturbed by man or beast, he slept. But not for long. By midafternoon he was awake again, and his first effort with the war-bow of his father netted him a rabbit. With a fire of twigs too small and dry to cause a noticeable column of smoke, he cooked the rabbit piece by piece. Afterward, where a spring bubbled from a vein of lignite, he drank and painted himself for war. Finally when the evening breeze stirred the cottonwoods and he felt his voice could not be heard, he made his spiritual preparations for battle by softly chanting the war- and death-songs of his people. Then he was away, heading toward the springtime hunting-grounds of the Sioux. . . .

But it seemed that the genius of evil luck had not deserted the son of Tall Elk.



Although he pushed forward day after day, winding and circling through the hills and badlands, he saw no sign of a living foe.

And then one day when the time of the full moon was nearly come, he lay flat in the grass on top of the Killdeer mountain, gazing out over the land for some sign of his enemies. Suddenly he stiffened: Far to the east was the figure of a mounted warrior. He had but a glimpse as the warrior breasted a divide, but it was enough. Coming from the land of the Sioux, the warrior was heading toward the river. It was the opportunity for which the son of Tall Elk had prayed and in a moment he was off in pursuit.

Within an hour he picked up the trail. When night came, he felt that he must be closing in, but he lost the trail in the darkness and must wait impatiently for the light of another day.

Twice during the next forenoon he sighted his prey far ahead, and now the object of his pursuit turned slightly toward the east. When he did so, the son of Tall Elk understood: Here was another on an errand like his own. The Sioux was heading for the neighborhood of the Arikara stockade. And the pursuer exulted. The Sioux would presently find exactly that which he sought.

All day the Arikara pressed steadily forward. At nightfall he came down over the high bluff along the great river. Ahead, the enemy entered the timber. Breaking into the tireless trot of the Indian runner, the Arikara followed, cautiously flitting from tree to tree, for he knew his enemy would go no farther than the edge of the timber. And so when the son of Tall Elk finally cornered



the warrior at the water's edge and leaped forth to do battle, he found himself face to face with the leering, grinning countenance of—the Wolf. . . .

Long after the sun went down, long after the moon came up, the Arikara sat on a fallen tree and gazed out across the hurrying flood of the Smoky Water. Across the stream he saw the gleam of a fire which marked the dancing-ground of his tribe. He could hear the murmur of drums, and at times the shrill, high-pitched voices of Indian singers. He knew there would be much of laughter at his expense, for the Wolf would be there waving the three scalps he had brought back from the land of the Sioux. Nor would the crafty Crow neglect to tell of the Indian youth who had followed a supposed enemy for so many miles, only to find that he had tracked down an ally of his own people.

Toward morning the son of Tall Elk got wearily to his feet. He took the bull-boat from its hiding-place and paddled across to the northern shore. There he lay down in the timber and slept the sleep of exhaustion.

When he awoke, it was broad daylight. From somewhere near he heard the voices of Indian women, and he raised his head to watch them working on the barren ground which should have been green with pumpkins, melons, beans and corn. The Melon Girl was there. He saw her standing in the plot of land which was hers, leaning on her hoe, her head bent in an attitude of discouragement.

That night he sat by the lodge-fire of the Corn Woman. The news of his ludicrous trailing of the Wolf was known to the entire village. To cut off the expressions of mingled banter and sympathy, he pulled a blanket over his head.

About him, the children and dogs rolled and played, but he paid no attention. He heard the conversation of women cleaning their kettles. The one topic uppermost was the drought: Without immediate rain, their crops on the bottom-lands must be a total loss. Yet there was no cloud in all the blue of the sky, the wind was wrong and the sun went down in the coppery haze of blowing dust.

Worse yet, this was the second year of drought. Their supplies, carried over for



When the sun was low in the west he still dragged the terrible skull about the arena, but his strength was waning rapidly.

just such an emergency, were exhausted, and something closely akin to starvation stared them in the face. The situation was desperate.

Suddenly, over the ceaseless lamenting of the women, came the exultant voice of the Wolf. From the dancing-ground he loudly recited the story of his bravery and a thrilling account of the three scalps. Long afterward, it was learned that they came from an old man, a boy and a woman digging wild turnips in the Bad Lands. But the Wolf pictured a terrific contest ending finally in his success. Clearly, the Melon Girl was to be his!

The blanket which covered the son of Tall Elk slipped to the ground. Suddenly he arose and stood erect. On the face which had reflected only utter discouragement, now shone the light of a great resolve.

Later he scratched at the buffalo-hide door of the medicine-man's lodge. Entering, he stood before Bear's Paunch.

"Grandfather," he said, "if rain does not come, many of our people will starve: is this true?"

Bear's Paunch nodded his head.

"Tonight, then," said the son of Tall Elk, "I shall talk with the Great Holy One above."

The medicine-man stirred.

"And tomorrow," continued the youth, the light of his great resolve burning brightly in his face, "I shall go and see the Holy One and ask that he may send the rain."

The eyes of Bear's Paunch glittered. Not for many years had one dared the awful torture of the Buffalo-dance in behalf of the tribe. So terrible was the ordeal that none might be forced to undergo it, and few dared it of their own volition. Bear's Paunch got to his feet.

"Grandson," he said, "if you are strong enough to do this thing, then you will be—a man above all men."

STILL later, when all light had faded from the west, when the night wind moaned over the stockade and the cries of wolves came drifting in from the timber, the son of Tall Elk, clad only in breech-cloth and moccasins, went through the gates of the stockade and

out onto the prairie. Passing through the silent ranks of the Arikara guard, he headed straight for the shadowy line of bluffs encircling the benchlands on which the village stood.

On the crest of a bluff, high above the valley, stood two scaffolds side by side. Each, supported on four posts, was a narrow platform whose cross-members were poles lashed to the posts. On each of the platforms was a long bundle wrapped in blankets and hides. Here under the sun- and wind-dried bodies of his father and mother, he stopped.

FOR a time he stood motionless and silent looking up the "Way of Souls"—in the white man's language, the Milky Way. Looking along the shorter branch, he saw where the souls of evildoers plunged into the abyss of eternal punishment and he shivered.

Looking at the longer branch, he saw where the souls of brave warriors and true men moved on to paradise. Here the light of his resolve again spread across his features. Lifting his arms, he began to pray.

The first part of his prayer, directed to the God of his people, asked that through his sacrifice, rain might come to cover the prairies with green, to bring back the vanished herds of the buffaloes and to germinate the seeds in the gardens of the Arikara. The second was to the spirits of his father and mother, that they might be with him in his agony. In the third, again to the Great Holy One above, he asked for strength to meet the test.

He was praying when the moon swung across the zenith while it dropped in the western sky. He was praying when the first faint light of dawn touched the east. Then, as the light spread and fleecy clouds were touched with the bloom of the prairie rose, he set out down the face of the bluff. He was prepared for death.

At the dancing-arena of the Arikara, singers were taking their places about the drums. Around the great circle, marked and shaded by freshly cut boughs, old men sat shoulder to shoulder. Behind them a wall of faces where women and children squatted or stood in serried ranks and now into the arena where the buffalo grass was trodden into dust from the wear of dancing feet, came the younger men and warriors of the tribe.

They were a ghastly lot. No two were dressed or painted alike. Some had their faces painted half in one color and

half in another with contrasting lines on their cheeks or forehead; others carried the insignia of secret societies in place of purely ornamental markings. Some wore headdresses embroidered with porcupine quills, others, of eagle feathers trailing to their heels. Breech-cloths, seatless trousers of buckskin and beaded moccasins; leather bands and plaques embroidered with beads and quills made up most of their clothing. The sun gleamed on bodies coated with buffalo marrow and paint, on bands of burnished copper, tiny mirrors, and naked steel.

Many were masked in the skulls of horses, elk and buffaloes. One wore a horse's tail affixed to his breech-cloth, another the tail of a buffalo. In their hands they carried knives and bows and lances, medicine and tobacco bags, hoops of ash on which were strung other tiny hoops each carrying the tanned and dried scalp of an enemy. Fixed to their ankles were bands carrying little bells and a rhythmic jungle accompanied each footfall of the wearers. Arranging themselves in a circle about the oval, they too squatted on their heels to await the next act in the drama.

SHORTLY before sunrise, the medicine-man, loaded with paint, feathers, pipe and a bag of buckskin, entered. In one hand he carried a sharp knife, in the other the skull of a buffalo—and behind the skull trailed two leather thongs. He set the skull in the center of the circle and facing the east, began to pray.

Just as the sun swung above the horizon, the son of Tall Elk entered the arena. He came from his all-night vigil on the hill. He moved as one in a trance, as one whose mind is dissociated from all things earthly, as a man who has resigned himself to death. . . .

As he entered the oval, he saw the buffalo skull and its leather thongs. His face paled and he hesitated. Then his lips compressed to a hard line. He advanced and stood beside it.

A silence fell over the assembly. Then Bear's Paunch looked expectantly around the circle of faces.

A warrior got to his feet and spoke. "I give two horses."

Another rose: "I give a buffalo robe."

Another: "I give a kettle." And so on, until each Indian present had offered some gift to the young man who had offered even his life.

Again silence fell. Now nerves were tense, so tense that when a meadow lark

alighted on a tree-branch, his cheerful morning call caused a stir to run around the arena and the sharp hissing of in-drawn breath.

The medicine-man stepped forward and his knife flashed in the morning sun. The son of Tall Elk swayed drunkenly but no sound escaped his lips. Again the knife flashed down the naked back. The muscles of his face jerked violently and it seemed he was about to fall. His eyes opened and his gaze swept the ranks before him as if in a desperate appeal for help. He saw the face of an Indian girl framed against the sparkle of sunlight on the broad river behind her. He caught a look of infinite sympathy. He steadied then and swayed no longer nor did he move or cry out when the sinews were lifted on his back and the cruel thongs tied in place.

The medicine-man stepped back. A low rhythmic murmur rose on the morning air. From here and there came the scuffling of moccasins, the soft pulsing music of bells. The murmuring of drums rose to a roar. A singer burst forth in a weird high-pitched yell. The Buffalo-dance was on.

The son of Tall Elk moved. His face was pitted in agony, the muscles of his naked body leaped and writhed in torture. The thongs tightened. He swayed once more and stumbled to his knees. Again his eyes opened and again he saw the pitying face of the Indian girl, but now it was streaming with tears and he saw her tremble as the cottonwood leaves beside her trembled in the morning breeze. He was on his feet. The buffalo skull stirred and glided into motion.

ALL through the forenoon he forged ahead. In some way he must tear the sinews in his back and break loose from the skull.

Under the awful punishment the youth's mind was not quite clear, but he dodged this way and that hoping some dancer would step on the skull or become entangled in the thongs. But he was not to get off so easily.

They tempted him with morsels of food but he did not stop. Late in the afternoon when the merciless sun boiled down on his bare head and body, when the perspiration ran from his tortured form in streams, they offered him cool water. At the look of suffering they tempted him no more.

When the sun was low in the west he still dragged the terrible skull about the

arena but his strength was waning rapidly. He knew he was nearing the end. And still the skull tugged and bounded in his wake.

WHEN it seemed that darkness was shutting down about him, a thought came. He changed his course and struck out onto the prairie. He knew where a rock had been split by lightning. He might pass through. The skull could not.

The drums ceased to roar. The dancers broke off to follow. They saw him approach the riven rock and pass between. The thongs tightened and held. Then they saw him gather all his strength for a last desperate effort. He lunged ahead. Then came a single cry of mortal agony. The sinews snapped and he was free, free to plunge forward into the mercy of darkness and lie face downward on the ground.

The warriors fell back to stand in silent groups and the women advanced. They dipped sprigs of prairie sage in cool water and wiped the dried, blood-caked lips. They lifted him to a blanket and carried him to the village. He had gone out erect but a nameless youth. He returned unconscious but he came as a man carrying the name of his father.

Some one had set up the vermilion-dyed abode which was once the lodge of his father and the ground before it was heaped high with every manner of household equipment.

They carried him into his home and bathed his wounds, and rubbed into them sterile ashes, that the marks of his bravery and sacrifice might never fade. Afterward they dressed his wounds with ointments from the pharmacopœia of the red man, and then they went away—all but one.

Sometime during the night, a crimson flash flared in the sky. Crash followed crash, and the earth trembled. Tall Elk stirred and awoke. Another blinding flash, and the steady roar of a great storm beating against the leather walls. Tall Elk felt his head lifted against something warm and soft. He felt cool water trickling through his lips. The pain was gone; he felt only a great desire to sleep. Again a crash rocked the earth, and the sound of wind and rushing rain became deafening. But Tall Elk did not listen. He heard and felt something greater even than the life-giving rain, the steady beating of a human heart, a woman's heart, against his face.

The Bishop of

Guns for Abyssinia—and desperate war on a Red Sea steamer. . . . A favorite writer in fine form.

"SO that's where the coffee comes from! You know, I used to think Mocha was some island near Java."

Thus spoke the Bishop, standing by the rail and scrutinizing the Arabian shore.

"Coffee used to come from here, anyhow," Breen said dryly. "Nothing much left of the place now. Hodeida and other Yemen ports have put it out of business."

"Dear me!" the Bishop observed. Despite Red Sea heat, his spare, angular figure was encased in conventional black, from shovel-hat to gaiters; his angular, deep-eyed features held a fine episcopal poise and severity. One suspected that he had never learned to smile. He was not the rubicund, jolly type of bishop, to regard hell with a hearty laugh and a snap of the fingers. Not much!

"We'll be slow getting in," Breen said. "Two-knot current, patches of shoal all about, and those craft anchored wherever they please. Also, this French skipper of ours has a case of nerves already."

"You speak like a mariner, Mr. Breen."

"Mariner?" Breen chuckled. "I'm a master in steam, if that means anything to you. That is, a master without a job. I had a first officer's berth in the Delta line, but got stranded at Aden with fever. Blasted quarantine people made me stop ashore. So I took passage on this French tinpot just to reach Suez and Alexandria, where my line will put me in a berth sooner or later. Unless I starve first."

The Bishop listened, sage appraisal in his ascetic, thinly carved features.

"Dear me!" he observed again. His accent was pronounced Oxford, which is quite impossible to convey by the written word. "I myself am in a singular, and even sad, situation. I presume you are not acquainted with these waters?"

"I am," Breen replied bitterly. "The Delta promised me one of their ships the end of the year; they have a big coasting run, you know, clear down British East, and from Suez to Bombay. I know the Red Sea like the palm of my hand—and small good it's done me, so far."

The Bishop rubbed his chin, looked at the melancholy town of Mocha, and then looked back at Breen.

"If you had a chance to earn a hundred quid,—I should say, a hundred guineas, five hundred full dollars,—would it interest you?"

"Don't ask me," said Breen. "Just tell me."

"We might step below to my so-called cabin," the Bishop said gently. "It is more private. And while I do not myself indulge in alcohol, I was given a bottle of schnapps at Aden which is said to be remarkably fine Hollands, and I'd be glad to put it at your service."

Breen nodded, and followed, in some little astonishment.

He was not a large fellow, this Breen. One of those slender, soft-spoken men who can display the most disconcerting contrasts in the world, if necessary. Thirty, you would make him at a venture, with a certain trim, hard look to his skin, and a lithe spring to his step, and a bright dark eye which looked up more than down, and straight out at one more than anywhere else.

IN his stuffy cabin the Bishop set out an unopened bottle of fine Hollands, and a glass and a siphon. The siphon was half empty, Breen noted, but to himself. The Bishop apologized for having no ginger beer to go with the gin, which betrayed a very handsome knowledge of what a drink may be.

Breen filled a glass.

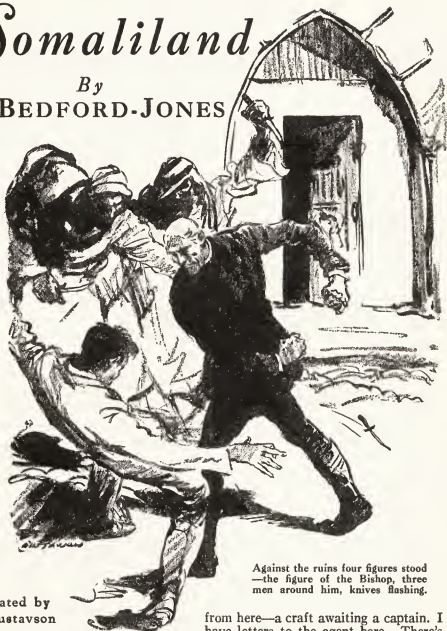
"How, Bishop! Or should I say, My Lord?"

"That is usually the accepted title," the Bishop rejoined. "But I must inform you that I am a missionary bishop only, my friend. My see is British Somaliland and the various outlying missions, one of them near Djibouti in French territory. And this is the cause of my present predicament."

The ship, at slow speed, had swung with the channel. Breen glanced out the open port, which had a seaward view. Two long, low streamers of smoke broke

Somaliland

By
H. BEDFORD-JONES



Illustrated by
L. R. Gustavson

Against the ruins four figures stood
—the figure of the Bishop, three
men around him, knives flashing.

the horizon: Italian destroyers, no doubt, patrolling these waters with savage intent to stop all running of guns across to Ethiopia and parts adjacent.

"You mean, the war over yonder has tied you up?"

"In a way, yes," said the Bishop, removing his hat to display a close-cropped head. "I am most anxious to reach my diocese; in fact, I positively must reach the French Somaliland mission at the earliest date. At Aden, I found there would be no steamer for two weeks. I was told, however, of a craft putting out

from here—a craft awaiting a captain. I have letters to the agent here. There's the whole thing in a nutshell, Mr. Breen."

"Huh?" Breen's eyes narrowed a trifle. "Me take out an Arab dhow?"

"No, no; she is a steamer, I understand," the Bishop corrected him. "One of those boats we saw here at anchor. I can arrange matters. I will guarantee you five hundred American dollars if you land me safely. Does it tempt you? Is it enough money?"

Breen looked at him for a moment, set down his drink, and fumbled for a cigarette.

"That's all right, Bishop. What's behind it? You don't expect me to swallow

that yarn. Oh, I don't mean to insult you; probably it's quite true. But—what's the rest of it?"

The missionary Bishop of Somaliland looked a trifle crestfallen.

"I shall have to tell you, I suppose," he said uneasily. "It's a most—er—most humiliating thing for me, unfortunately. This mission station is a bit down the coast from Djibouti, you know. The French authorities cabled me at Aden to come at once, as they were using the place for some of their newly landed troops who are destined for consular and railroad protection in Ethiopia. The fact is, my curate left there all the sacred vessels, which are of much value, and also the books and reports and records of the diocese—and he died of malaria at the Djibouti hospital last week. Thus I must get there at all costs and retrieve the diocesan property."

SO earnest was the man, so sincerely engrossed in the little details of his affairs, at a moment when war was bursting over land and sea, that Breen felt a sudden sharp pity for him, and wonder.

"Look here, Bishop," he said curtly. "That Red Sea yonder is fuller of warships than of Egyptians right now. The Italians have twice tried to land troops right here in Yemen, and the British chased 'em off. They want to stop gun-runners. So do the French and British. I'd gamble any money that these ships anchored here are loaded with munitions for Ethiopia. I bet these boys have made use of you."

The Bishop waved his hands in the air.

"That is aside from the question of my duty," he said firmly. "I understand this ship awaiting us is under the British flag. That, sir, is protection enough!"

"You may think so. I was born under the Stars and Stripes," said Breen, with his dry laugh. "And these blackshirts are go-getters. They don't give a darn for flags, but for facts. Well, you offer me five hundred bucks to take the craft over, eh? All right. I'll play with you. But mind this! That money is going to be doubled by whatever agent is in this blasted place before we sail."

"You're not satisfied?" the Bishop inquired.

"Sure, so far as you're concerned. But I'm no fool. The craft has munitions aboard, beyond question. In that case, the owners are going to pay. Wait till you see what sort of town this is, Bishop! You just don't know. Why, there's hardly

been a vessel here except the monthly lighthouse-tender from Aden, these five years. Outside of Arab dhows, there's no trade. And you talk of agents!"

The Bishop nodded.

"Undoubtedly you are right, sir," he observed. "Unhappily, I have not moved largely in the world of men; my Magdalen fellowship, my lectures, scarcely prepared me for the call to labor in a savage country. However, since you express a willingness to attempt the venture—"

"We'll see about it," Breen stood up. "I promise nothing. I know this tinpot expects to take on water here, and has brought up a bit of cargo from Aden, so we'll have all the rest of the day ashore to settle the matter."

He departed, and sought out the alleged purser, who doubled as supercargo and anything else necessary aboard the tiny, filthy little coaster. The Bishop, he learned, was George Augustus Kenworthy Braggton-Hurts, D.C.L., and had come aboard at the final moment in Aden, for passage here to Mocha. Which was all the Frenchman knew or cared. . . .

Breen stood out on deck, beneath the after awning, and with a critical air watched as the French skipper managed to foul a dhow's mooring-line and scrape the edge of a coral patch, and send his ship shuddering on along the curving channel amid blasts of Arab curses and Norman bellowings. It was enjoyable.

Five dhows and a steamer lay here, all deeply laden, and bristling with Arabs. Breen eyed the steamer with disgust. Barely a thousand tons, all red rust and dirt, and so heavily laden that her Plimsoll mark was clear out of sight. She had steam up, as a lazy thread of smoke from her one funnel disclosed. A tattered awning was stretched above her bridge-deck aft; the British flag hung listless; and she bore a name in Arabic characters. With a grunt, Breen turned to look at the approaching town.

ONCE a city on the shore, whose walls were still in place with a ruined stone jetty stretching out into the water, Mocha was little more than ruins. The bay was guarded by a fort on each of the low points; these forts were also ruins. The thought of landing here and spending the rest of the day ashore was unpleasant; but Breen needed the money.

"Be damned if I wouldn't run the devil's own guns, if the coin was good!" he muttered. "Hm! The old rat-trap seems to be looking up a bit."

From seaward, the town showed well enough, with its unbroken circuit of walls, topped by the lofty minarets of mosques. A few soldiers were in evidence; outside the walls was a huddle of huts that housed a floating population of nomad Arabs and Somalis. Across the sandy plain ran the road and telegraph-line to Hodeida. Outside the chief gate, near the jetty, many camels were standing or lying; some caravan had arrived, and trading was in progress.

Breen looked back again at the disconsolate little steamer, and shook his head uncertainly. . . .

Inhabited by a scant few hundred, where once great thousands had lived, Mocha was a dead city in very truth. Many of the streets were impassable from ruins of houses that had fallen across them; desolation was everywhere, save in the grand mosque, whose hundred-foot minaret fingered the sky.

Yet many strangers were here. The Imam of Yemen had sent a few soldiers to prepare quarters for more who would follow; Arabs and Baluchis from Muscat, crews from the idle craft anchored in the roads, and outlanders of curious types and breeds. One of these last, a Syrian Arab who spoke fluent English, inhabited a once palatial abode near the grand mosque—a house brilliant with old tiles, a shaded courtyard where scrag-

gly orange trees perfumed the air, with tattered rugs soft underfoot.

This man was the agent to whom the Bishop bore letters. A scowling man, in his way obsequious and scornful all at once; by name Yusuf the Damascene. He seated the Bishop and Breen in his courtyard; a slave brought fresh-bruised and brewed coffee, and business was discussed.

"My Lord, in obliging you I am honored," said Yusuf. "My ship, the *Nur-redin*, is ready to depart; she awaits but certain cargo brought by your vessel yonder, and a captain who knows these waters. If you have brought the captain, all is well." And his black eyes stabbed at Breen.

"What cargo has she aboard now?" Breen demanded bluntly. The Dama-

"I've no business here," said Breen, with a nod toward the Damascene. "Yusuf, here, can't do the impossible, so that settles it. Get another captain."



scene touched the papers that lay on the carpet by his crossed feet.

"Condensed milk, rais effendi," he rejoined. "Here is the manifest; these be stores for the French troops at Djibouti. They will be landed down the coast, it is true, at the spot My Lord Bishop desires to reach; the French expect to make use of this spot, which is very healthy, as cantonments. There is no harbor, but at this monsoon, the landing is quite safe. Captain Delisle of the French army will meet you there and receive the stores."

"It looks very neat," said Breen dryly. "If you expect me to sign for the voyage there and back, think of a good lump sum in advance."

"A lump sum? In advance?" Yusuf rolled his eyes to heaven, plucked at his beard, and called upon Allah to witness that here was a Nazarene who was certainly a madman. "Such a thing is impossible, rais effendi. It is simply impossible."

"All right; suits me." Breen rose. "I'll stroll about town for a bit and stretch my legs, Bishop. Meet you at the boat—I suppose you're going aboard for your duffle?"

"My duffle? Oh, of course; my luggage, yes!" The Bishop blinked at him. "You're not leaving us?"

"I've no business here," said Breen, with a nod toward the Damascene. "Yusuf, here, can't do the impossible, so that settles it. Get another captain."

"Come back here in twenty minutes, at least," said the Bishop hurriedly, with a slight gesture that held Yusuf silent. "Let me discuss the matter with this gentleman."

"Fair enough." And with a nod, Breen departed.

He sauntered out, filling his briar, into the hot sunlight. He was wearing a good heavy sun-helmet and was glad of a chance to stroll about the old dead city by himself. So the Bishop would talk with Yusuf, eh? He chuckled at the thought; still, the Bishop undeniably had a way with him, a certain authority.

A street of ruined buildings drew him—fallen stone blocks and masonry where once had been bazaars and dwellings, giving glimpses of old courtyards and brown-burned gardens: water in Mocha came now by aqueduct from the hills.

THE narrow, twisting street was completely blocked ahead. Breen turned back, mouthing his pipe, fumbling for matches. He turned into another in-

credibly narrow street where there was some sign of life—a bazaar or two, mere holes in the walls, where sweetmeat-sellers crouched, and loaves of Arab bread drew the flies. A café, the odor of mint tea wafting out upon the hot air, the sound of voices in singsong speech coming from the dark cool depths.

"Hi, matey!"

BREEN had paused, holding match to pipe; at the words, his eyes lifted from above his cupped hands and drove at the speaker. In the shadowed niche before the café he stood, a mammoth hairy figure in dirty pajamas and slippers: a grinning, genial behemoth of a fellow. On his wide exposed chest reposed, in neat blue, the somewhat astonishing figure of an entirely unclad lady who, most curiously, also appeared to be wearing a coat of transparent black fur. Breen's eye lingered on this paradox; then he met the gaze of the other man with a slight smile.

"Aye?" he rejoined.

"You come in on that French hooker?"

"Aye."

"Tell me, then, if she 'ad a swagger toff aboard as passenger?" inquired the behemoth anxiously. "Dark red 'air and a 'ard jaw, and a w'y with 'im to cut your 'ead off with a word?"

"No such person," Breen said, rather amused. "Only two passengers—me and the Bishop. Bishop of Somaliland."

"Bishop!" The other's jaw fell for an instant. "Gor bli'me! Then 'e aint come yet—and me keeping them packet rats down below with promises! Bli'me if they won't be 'alf mad."

Breen perceived that the giant was comfortably in liquor. Not too much, but somewhat. In the silence of the hot street, a tinny phonograph began to sound from somewhere among the houses, with a squealing repetition of Arabic, no doubt *suras* from the Koran. A scavenging dog yelped suddenly and fell silent.

A swift suspicion jerked at Breen.

"You're not from the *Nurreddin*, out yonder?" he asked sharply.

"And wot if I am?" rejoined the other, losing his smile.

"Nothing; I'm considering an offer to go in her as master, across to Africa and back. Breen is the name."

The big fellow gawked again, then clumsily took Breen's extended hand.

"Blow me, Cap'n—how'd I know?" he said. "Aye; Gaffney, first officer. —Master, is it? Proud to tip your mitt, sir."

"If you say the word, we might have a drink. Mint tea, perhaps."

"Aye, sir; if you like it. Proud to stand you one, sir. Master, says you? Well, it's past me. And so 'e wasn't aboard?"

"No such person," said Breen, and walked into the dark, foul place and sat at the bare wooden board on a bench. Gaffney joined him. An Arab came and went again.

"What did you mean by having packet-rats below?" Breen asked abruptly.

"Why, sir, that—that was the crew," stammered Gaffney in obvious confusion. "They aint to appear, not today. Lookin' for the—for a cap'n to come, sir. If 'e aint 'ere—that is, the one we was expecting—"

"Stop it, and let's have the truth, Mister," said Breen quietly.

"I can't, sir." Breathing heavily, Gaffney lifted a glass that held no mint tea, and drained it. He sidled a look at Breen uneasily. "I let that slip, sir. Orders is orders, and I aint to talk."

"I see. Just who is this master you were expecting?"

"Why, Cap'n Stafford, sir."

"Stafford!" The word escaped Breen's lips in a gust. "Surely not! You can't mean it. Not that man Stafford."

GAFFNEY swung about, his face like a thundercloud. Just then the Arab returned, placed a steaming glass of thin tea stuffed with mint before Breen, took his coin and departed. Then Gaffney spoke, in a low voice of restraint.

"Careful, sir. All right, Cap'n Stafford is. I've sailed with 'im. It aint like they say."

Breen met his hot gaze with calm eyes.

"I don't know him, Mr. Gaffney. I've heard only what's public property at Aden and elsewhere: That Stafford has lost his ticket, is a murderer and pirate and worse."

"There's some as swears by 'im, sir," came the low, thick voice. Reading the hot eyes, Breen perceived that here was the rarest thing in the world: loyalty.

"I beg your pardon, Mister," he said quietly. "I didn't mean to hurt you."

"Gor bli' me!" The great paw, black with fur, was thrust out. "Spoke like a gentleman, sir; and there's my 'and on it, if you'll 'ave it."

"I will," said Breen, and shook. He liked this man.

"So you're taking 'er out? Then you'll want me aboard, sir."

"No hurry," said Breen. "It's not decided yet. You still won't talk?"

"Can't talk, sir, unless you're with us. I'm main sorry, sir—"

"Dead right," Breen gulped at the mint tea, and set it down with a grimace. "So you've got a crew down below, and Arabs laying up on deck for appearances, eh?"

"Stokers, sir," Gaffney assented sheepishly. "No 'arm in saying that much."

"None, I hope. But why the devil worry about appearances in this place? Or keep men out of sight? It sounds absurd; still, you won't talk." Breen relighted his pipe. "Whether I go or not, you'll have the Bishop aboard. Braggeton-Hurts is the name, and it wears gaiters. Going over to the French coast."

"The Bishop? A real live bishop? Gor bli' me!" Gaffney shook his head helplessly. "A bishop aboard 'er! You know what 'er nyme is, sir; *Nurredin*. Light o' the Faith, that's wot. Fine craft for a bishop!"

Breen rose. "I must run along. If I take on the job, I'll send for you. Have you a boat ashore?"

"Aye, sir, at the jetty. Two o' them stokers rowed it. I'll be 'ere, sir."

Breen nodded and strode out.

The blinding white sunlight refracted from the white coral rock around hit him like a blow. Puffing at his pipe, he walked along, frowning over his encounter. This man Gaffney interested him.

Stafford, eh? Dark and scandalous tales of that man circulated at Aden. A very blackguard, the king of all blackguards. He had escaped jail and was somewhere at large, probably down at Mombasa or Zanzibar; no one was certain. He had killed three men and an officer in his crew, murdered them out of hand, deliberately. Dead drunk at the time. And piled up his ship. With elaborate embroidery of all kinds, that was the gist of it.

Fine man to ferry a bishop across the Red Sea!

SUDDENLY Breen halted in astonishment. He had turned back into that ruined, blocked street; it seemed that every twist of the narrow lanes led him into it. But against the ruins four figures stood in clear sight: figures in rapid, silent action. Not even an oath.

The angular figure in black, the grotesque costume of an Anglican bishop; three men around him, knives flashing in the sunlight.

Breen was a moment in realizing the astounding scene—robbery or murder, no doubt. The Bishop was hitting out with his fists.

Breen uttered a shout and broke forward, just as all three assailants closed on the Bishop. What happened was impossible to see, at the instant. Two of the three fled; the third remained, prostrate. As the others ducked into houses, Breen saw there was blood on their faces. The man who lay on the stones was senseless; blood ran over his face too; he was not an Arab, but wore whites.

AS Breen came up, the Bishop straightened, picked up his shovel hat, and dusted off his garments calmly.

"Hurt, sir?" Breen demanded.

"No, thank you; it is indeed gratifying that you came so opportunely, Mr. Breen." Gratitude and earnest appreciation filled the high-carved face of the cleric. "I came out to have a look for you, and suddenly these men demanded my money. Provisionally, I am able to defend myself."

"So it seems." Breen looked down at the senseless man. "Hello! Looks like an Italian. And what did you draw the claret with, Bishop? Knuckles?"

"Knuckles?" repeated the other vaguely, and looked at his bony fists. "Ah, this ring must have cut them up a bit."

"Hm! I've seen knuckles at work before this; but suit yourself. Want me to haul this chap along? They have some sort of authority here, of course."

"No, no; my dear fellow, I harbor no resentment," the Bishop said hurriedly. He was not even panting, which was certainly odd. "No, let the poor misguided fellow be. You might pull him into the shade, if you don't mind."

Breen complied. The man was certainly an Italian; his sleeve fell away to show the Fascist emblem tattooed on his arm.

"Looking for me, you say?"

"Yes indeed." The Bishop took his arm, and they turned away together.

"Yes, I was looking for you, as I say."

"I'm here," Breen said dryly.

"Beastly hot place, eh? I've talked with our friend Yusuf. I must say, sir, he displayed a very proper friendly spirit. Even in this outlandish place, one finds a certain respect for the cloth that is most heartening. Yes, even among the heathen. It gives one hope."

"Not me," said Breen bluntly. "If I take out that craft and you're aboard,

don't look for any particular respect in the matter of language. I warn you, that when it comes to handling seamen, language is essential."

"Thank heaven, sir, I am no stickler for speech," responded the Bishop, with a squeeze of his fingers on Breen's arm. "I am, I trust, a sensible man. . . . Well, Yusuf wants to see you at once. He's ready to offer you an additional hundred pounds, in advance, on condition that you leave here tonight with the ship."

Breen put his pipe in his pocket.

"Let's go, Bishop. And thank your stars that it's me instead of that murdering villain Stafford you're with!"

The Bishop took a step backward.

"Stafford!" he repeated. "Dear me! What do you mean by that, sir?"

"He was expected as master of this hooker," Breen said. "I came instead. Then you've heard of the man?"

"Yes. Yes. Dear me! Aden was full of stories about him. Upon my word, you startle me, sir! You don't suppose the man is around here?"

"He's not," said Breen. "Come on."

BREEN pocketed his money. He did not mention the singular meeting with an Italian and two other assassins; nor did the Bishop say anything about it to Yusuf of Damascus. The talk was all business. The Bishop did, however, appear somewhat nervous.

"Condensed milk, eh?" Breen took up the ship's papers. "I see all's cleared and shipshape; fine port authorities you've got here. And all's to be landed at the same spot near Djibouti. We must get through the Bab el Mandeb strait and across—hm! I'll do my best."

"I'll have to go back to our ship and get my things," said the Bishop.

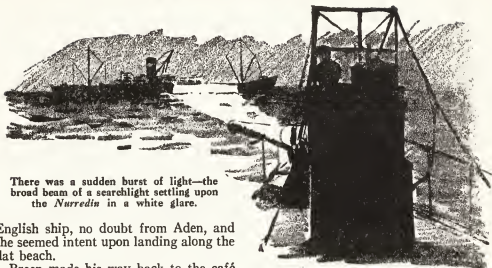
"Then, will you be good enough to fetch the bag out of my cabin?" said Breen. "Here's the cabin key. I'll go directly aboard this rust-heap of ours and see what can be done about getting her shipshape by night."

"Gladly," the Bishop replied, and took the key. Then his head jerked sharply, and his eyes met those of the Damascene. "What the devil's that noise?"

Breen gave him a look, heard the same thing, and started up.

"Airplane. See you later."

The drumming sound waxed into a roar; gaining the open air, in common with all the other inhabitants of Mocha, Breen looked up at the machine which was heading down in a wild dive. An



There was a sudden burst of light—the broad beam of a searchlight settling upon the *Nurredin* in a white glare.

English ship, no doubt from Aden, and she seemed intent upon landing along the flat beach.

Breen made his way back to the café and located it easily. The enormous Gaffney was standing out in the street with a crowd of natives, and craning his bull neck at the airplane. Breen took him by the arm.

"Come along inside and talk, Mister. I'm taking out the tinpot tonight, and need to know a few things."

Gaffney accompanied him inside. The place was momentarily empty.

"Now talk," snapped Breen. "Cargo of munitions, I suppose."

"Aye, sir," muttered Gaffney, wiping sweat from his broad face.

"What kind of a crew below-decks?"

"All good men, sir. White men."

"Arabs are white men. What other officers?"

"Mr. McNeill, the chief, and an Arab assistant. Second officer, Jem Lewis, aboard 'er now. Arab black-gang."

"How many in the crew you've got hiding?"

"Twelve, sir."

"Plenty. And why are they hiding?"

Gaffney wiped his brow anew. "Account o' spies, sir. Eyetalians and others 'ere in town; they 'ave Arabs in their pay, Mr. Breen. It aint safe by 'alf. We couldn't 'ave it known we're ready to sail."

"And you with steam up? Nonsense. Where'd you get this crew?"

"Why, sir, they just 'appened along, so to speak—"

"No lies," said Breen. Gaffney blinked at him anxiously, desperately.

"Well, sir, if you 'ave to know the blinkin' truth, we've all of us got a lay in this 'ere cargo."

"Oh!" Light dawned upon Breen. "A company of gentleman adventurers

running munitions, eh? And you've got a French officer bribed, and everything set—once you get across."

"Yes sir, that's the w'y of it," Gaffney muttered.

Breen abandoned his probe. No use going too far back; better to accept the situation and make the best of it. If it were true that these men all had a share in the business, well and good; he was assured of a reliable crew.

"You know the risks, then," he said quietly. "So do I. The war is on, over there; we don't know yet whether the League of Nations will do anything more than the sanctions—whether England will do anything more. Everything's in turmoil. And anyone who runs us down and takes a look at our condensed milk, will grab us. We're plain filibusters."

"That's it, sir." Gaffney's lowering countenance cleared.

"Then we'd best go aboard. What about stores?"

"Everything shipshape, sir."

THEY left the city without hindrance or even questions from guards at the gate. Most of the town, and the rabble who lived in the huts outside the walls, were streaming down the beach to where the glittering wings of an airplane showed, with an officer standing guard beside it. Another officer, in the trim R.A.F. uniform, stood on the jetty talking with a number of Arabs there.

"Gor bli' me!" said Gaffney. "Talkin' with my men, 'e is!"

"No harm in that," said Breen. "An Air Force man isn't looking into the cargoes of ships."

The mate scowled anxiously.

"Oh, hello!" exclaimed the officer, turning to them with undisguised cordiality. "I say, these beggars don't seem willing to run me out to that French boat. They say they're your men—"

"Aye," said Gaffney, still scowling. "We're from the *Nurredin* yonder. This is Mr. Breen, the master."

The officer nodded to Breen, who spoke in return.

"We'll be glad to take you out, certainly. Nothing wrong with your machine?"

"Eh? Oh, no! I came up to get some information about the Frenchman."

"Perhaps I can tell you what you want," Breen offered. "I came up from Aden in her, to take command of this heap of junk yonder. Just got my clearance papers."

"Right," the airman said briskly. "I wanted to learn what passengers came up here in her."

"I was one, and the only other aboard was the Bishop of Somaliland."

"Eh? The jolly old Bish?" The pilot grinned. "That's news; but I'm not looking for him. Nobody else, you're certain?"

"Not unless some one was disguised in garlicky mustaches." Breen laughed.

"Mind if I take a look at your ship's papers? I've no particular authority, you know—" The pilot glanced at the papers in Breen's hand.

"Not a bit. Help yourself."

The other did so, glancing over the documents rapidly, and returning them.

"Somebody got the bright idea that this chap Stafford might have been aboard the French *courrier*," he explained, lighting a cigarette and offering the packet. "You've heard of Stafford, if you were at Aden? Turned out that the beggar was there two days ago. Devilish brass, if you ask me. Look here, I think I'll take a look over the French crew just the same, if you don't mind giving me a lift out to her."

Breen motioned toward his boat, into which the two Arabs had climbed.

"You're cleared for Djibouti, I see," said the pilot. "Leaving at once?"

GAFFNEY broke in, before Breen could speak.

"Won't get away for a day or two," he said in his cockney nasal speech. He met the sharp glance of Breen, and twisted up his face in an appealing grimace. Breen kept silence.

The officer was put aboard the French packet, and with the boat heading over for the *Nurredin*, Breen spoke softly.

"Mister, you watch your tongue. Why did you lie to him?"

"Sorry, sir," Gaffney said. "It don't never pay to tell too much, sir. I was all in a sweat, sir, what with 'im askin' for Mr. Stafford, and spoke afore I thought."

Breen made no reply. He had a remarkable faculty for saying nothing, at times. He saw nothing of the Bishop anywhere on shore or aboard the Frenchman, and wondered how His Lordship expected to get aboard and over to the *Nurredin*, but dismissed the mental query with a shrug. Apparently the Bishop had money, and money could do much.

ONCE up on the dirty deck of his new command, Breen spoke to his mate. "Call up the crew, Mister. All hands muster for'ard."

"But, sir—"

"Look alive, Mister. Do you want trouble?"

With a despairing mutter, Gaffney lurched away. Breen eyed the curious Arabs, the nearly naked, sweat-streaked men who gathered. He spoke briefly with the young second officer, Lewis, and the dour, shrewd-eyed engineer, McNeill. They, and the men, astonished him; he had anticipated riffraff, but these were a bright, smart, eager lot, good men all. He gave them a few words, set about a tour of inspection, and issued his orders. They took hold with a will.

But suspicion increased to certainty: There was something queer in the wind. The frantic anxiety of Gaffney to keep these men hidden from sight voiced it. Half a dozen tiny indications blew the same way. Nothing to put a finger on.

Not the running of guns or munitions would account for it. There was something else behind it. None of the officers was the type of man to risk his ticket—and jail—by running munitions. Breen could sense something desperate in their manner, in the manner of the men; he was fully aware of low snatches of talk, of words exchanged in passing.

"She's a mess, Mr. Breen," said the chief, coming along with his pipe puffing nobly. "Her plates are paper-thin aside from rust, her gear and tackle are an exposition of the day o' miracles, her boats and all else are fearful and wonderful to look at; but I've got her engines in shape. Mind you, the boilers may go out any time."

"Then we'll break no records, eh?" And Breen smiled.

"We will not. Are you the Breen who was first officer in the Delta line? So I thought. American, eh? Heard of you from some chaps in Suez. Y'may think me a bit personal, but I'm curious, very curious, to learn how in thunder you ever cast your hook along of the crew of the *Chiltern*."

"The *Chiltern*? Her crew?" Breen gave the dour old Scot a puzzled glance. "I don't know what you're driving at, chief. Never heard of her or of her crew."

McNeill's jaw fell. He gave Breen one round-eyed look, then clamped his teeth on his pipe and grunted.

"My way of a joke," said he, gruffly. "When will ye want full steam on?"

"Four bells, six o'clock; high water then, I understand."

"Very good." The chief departed with a nod, leaving Breen to wonder what the devil was the point of his odd inquiry.

There were two cooks—one Arab, one English. Of the crew, all were English, even the steward, who knew very little about his job. It was certainly rather singular, until Breen recollected that these men were probably all more or less partners in the munitions venture. And even then it remained a bit unusual.

The airplane took to flight, with a sustained droning roar that vanished in the heavens. The Frenchman, with clank and rattle of winches, was sending her cargo into boats. Gradually the decks of the *Nurredin* took on some semblance of order and decency, and Breen settled down to a minute perusal of his charts.

DIRECTLY across the Red Sea lay Eritrea and the concentration of Italian ships of all kinds. Breen's course lay south, down to where Perim Isle and the Straits of Bab el Mandeb—the "Gate of Affliction"—formed the narrow mouth of the Red Sea. Here in this forty-mile stretch lay the greatest danger.

Gaffney joined him, and to the giant he pointed the way.

"If we don't make more than eight knots, we'll be through into the Gulf of Aden before midnight, Mister; then point up slap for Djibouti, which we should raise by tomorrow noon."

"You forget the currents, sir." Gaffney knotted his brows. "I've heard said these Red Sea currents are bad."

"Eh? Don't you know anything about these waters?" Breen demanded.

"Not much, sir."

"Time you learned, then. We've got the southwest monsoon, and the water's running out of the Red Sea forty mile a day, lifting us right along."

"Oh!" The mate's visage cleared. "That's a bit of all right, then! But 'ere comes Jem—I mean, Mr. Lewis."

THE second mate drifted up, eyed the course, and nodded. He was a brisk young chap, clean-cut and efficient.

"I want to be out of here before dark and at sea," Breen said to them. "Have the lookout keep a sharp watch for submarines; I hear a couple of Italian subs are in these waters. No lights to be shown, and all lights aboard doused. Hello! Time's wearing on. No sign of our passenger yet? It's close to four bells now and the sun's going."

"I sent the boat ashore for 'im, sir," Gaffney replied, then broke out sharply: "Gor bli' me! If that aint 'im, then I'm a bloody Dutchman!"

Breen left his charts and followed them to the break of the bridge.

There, about the western gate of the town, some sort of commotion was going on. Men were shouting fiercely, and two or three figures were sprawled out. On the dead run for the jetty, where the boat waited, was the Bishop.

He was alone. He had lost his shovel hat, his long gaitered legs were twinkling rapidly, and the tails of his black coat stood out behind as he legged it full tilt. And the man could run.

"Bishop?" cried Lewis in an excited voice. "Why, good Lord! That's—"

A cry of pain broke from him; Gaffney, uttering a roar of encouragement to the runner, had stamped on the second officer's foot. He tendered gruff apology, then gave his attention to the shore again.

"Go it, Bishop!" he bellowed. "Englishmen together, says I! Wot say, lads?"

A yell went up from the rail below, where the crew had hastily gathered. Breen eyed the runner, got his binoculars hurriedly, and focused on the crowd around the gate. The sprawled figures were hurt men, no mistake about it; soldiers of the guard. An officer was giving orders. A number of men were running out in vain pursuit. A rifle cracked, then another.

The Bishop, very clearly, had got into hot water again.

"Mister!" Breen tapped Gaffney's shoulder. "Take charge. And you, Mr.

Lewis! We can't afford to be held up here. Whatever the Bishop has done, get clear with him. Get your winches going and haul in on the cable."

A yelp of delight broke from Gaffney. As the jetty was a good three hundred yards distant, it was impossible to tell the reason for the tumult. Through his glasses, Breen discerned an Arab who was waving a paper frantically, apparently at everyone around. The men who were trailing the Bishop were rapidly losing ground, for those gaitered legs covered the sand with incredible speed. Another shot was fired; whether at the Bishop, or in mere excitement, Breen could not tell.

The old ship was moving up on her anchor when the fugitive tumbled into the waiting boat and the two Arabs gave way at the oars. There was no other boat on hand, at the moment, and the pursuers were balked. Breen gave up the spectacle in order to get his ship under way. Half speed, and the engines began to thump. The winches banged and clanked as the cable came in, and the *Nurredin* headed seaward. Her filthy gangway was still out. The men were uttering yells of encouragement, sprinkled with adjectives which must have horrified the good cleric's ears.

"Take the boat in tow until we're clear of the land, Mister," ordered Breen. "Get the Bishop and the two men aboard."

He was interested in the mate's air. It was apparently one of wild delight, as though the excitement had made a new man of Gaffney. All the men, in fact, were in high spirits, laughing and joking, yelling at the boat, as though the escape of the Bishop were a matter for personal joy.

Breen remained at the controls himself, and the little coaster gathered way,

slipped past the moored dhows and gawking Arabs, threaded the turns of the channel with quickening speed.

Intent on his job, Breen was scarcely aware that the passenger had come aboard until the lanky, bare-headed black figure came up the port ladder. The Bishop paused to shake his fist at the receding town, and Breen chuckled.

"What about turning the other cheek, Bishop? Somebody else try to do you in?"

The Bishop swung around, his deep eyes blazing strangely.

"Oh, it's you, Mr. Breen! Did you see that disgraceful scene ashore? Why, they actually shot at me!"

"Apparently you did a bit of damage yourself. What caused it?"

"Fanaticism, sir, fanaticism of the heathen! I received a cable from Aden, forwarded by telegraph. It was addressed to me by my full title. Apparently no one had realized that I was a bishop of the Christian faith; upon learning this, the crowd attempted to mob me. I shall complain to the government about this! I give you my word, those soldiers were the worst of all."

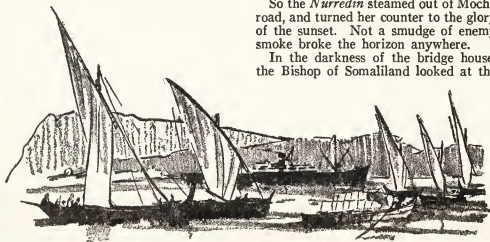
"You have good lungs." Breen eyed him shrewdly. "Not even out of breath, eh?"

"Sir, I pride myself upon my endurance and bodily physique," the Bishop replied. The man at the wheel was grinning, and the Bishop turned upon him. "You seem amused, my man! Is this impertinence on your part?"

"Nonsense, Bishop; the whole crew was cheering you," said Breen. "You, Smith! Wipe that grin off your face and mind the gear. Full speed ahead; watch that north fort, now! Sixty-two degrees, and we swing outside the shoal—"

So the *Nurredin* steamed out of Mocha road, and turned her counter to the glory of the sunset. Not a smudge of enemy smoke broke the horizon anywhere.

In the darkness of the bridge house, the Bishop of Somaliland looked at the



hooded binnacle light, whistled through his teeth, eyed the stars, and finally turned to Breen.

"May I venture a query, Mr. Breen? If you continue to hug the Arabian coast on this course, you'll not make the main channel through the straits at all."

"I don't intend to make it," said Breen, in the obscurity. "There's another channel, a small one."

"What?" The voice of the Bishop jerked, as though startled. "You know, sir, that the small channel is dangerous? That it runs to five fathoms, with patches of coral and a reef or two? To attempt it at night—"

"I've no time or inclination to do any arguing this night," said Breen quietly. "I don't give a hang where you learned so much about the straits channels. I'll thank you not to give me any interference or objection. I know my business; I'm master here; and you'd best go below and turn in for some sleep."

"Very good, sir." The Bishop rose with offended dignity, which could be sensed even in the darkness. "I intended only to give you practical advice—"

"Keep it for your curate," said Breen gently, and the Bishop departed. The man at the wheel, a bluff, brawny Yorkshireman, chuckled softly but voiced no comment.

Breen went out to the bridge rail, watching the flashing white light on Perim Isle, listening for the occasional reports from Mr. Lewis, who was keeping the lead going, and sweeping the phosphorescent reaches of water with his night-glasses. There was no moon, but the coastal haze which had brought many a good ship to a broken back in these waters was absent; the starry sky was clear. The *Nurredin* was doing a fair ten knots with the current, and all was well.

YET Breen knew it was a ticklish proposition. The Small Strait bore no lights, narrowed to a bit over a mile, had strong currents and was studded with shoal patches. Gaffney came ponderously up the ladder.

"All gear stowed and clear, sir. Closing in on Perim?"

"Aye," said Breen. "You can pick up the two red lights of Lloyd's signal station with the glasses. Now, Mister, listen close and no objections: Hold that flashing white light of High Perim exactly 164 degrees; two miles from the light, come about 133 degrees. That'll

clear the shoals and lead slap through the channel, clearing Obstruction Point by a thousand yards. Watch the lead closely; there's a three-fathom shoal two points off the port bow, and we can't be sure of the currents here."

"Aye, sir." Gaffney repeated the orders. "Two mile, says you, and that's bad guesswork at night."

"Make it good, then," Breen said curtly. "I'm going for my pipe; I'll be back at once."

He slipped down the ladder. The old ship was shuddering and heaving along; luckily there was very little sea running. On the deck below, he paused, staring off to starboard, held motionless by a dark blotch there; from the bridge it had been invisible against the water. Now it showed vaguely against the star-horizon. Once again he felt overwhelmed by the queerly indefinite things he could sense but not understand.

THE vasty deeps of the stars, the phosphorescent water, the vague mass off there to starboard, the flashing white light and the shoals ahead; all of it somehow bore him down and oppressed him with bitter unseen fingers. What a fool, to risk ticket and freedom and life itself for a thousand dollars! Yet he thrilled to it all, enjoyed the gamble. The only hard thing was his loneliness. These men obeyed him, but he was not one of them. In their very obedience was something tolerant, as though they humored a child; it infuriated him—

"Craft to starboard, no lights!" The low-voiced words were passed on from the lookout. "Looks like a native dhow."

So it looked; so it was. Lookout and master and Arabs were aware of the same thing, almost at the same instant. A harsh, wild chatter of Arab voices flittered over the water. A stir of light, then a sudden breaking flare, burst forth aboard the Arab; as with all such craft, no lights were shown from her, but flares were burned if another ship turned up suddenly. Already the *Nurredin* was passing, was past, and the flare receded.

Breen went on to his cabin. Then, in the passage, he came to a startled halt. A cabin door opened; a glare of light struck athwart the passage; he heard the voice of the Bishop speaking—no longer a suave, accented voice, but one firm and clipped and scandalous in its wording.

"That damned airplane did it, I tell you! Took back word of me. They sent a telegram from Aden—they'd found the

real Bishop trussed up in his hotel room. Damned close squeak, I tell you. If it hadn't been for the knuckles and the billy, I'd ha' been grabbed. That's twice today. That Italian spy recognized me. Shut that door, you damned fool!"

Too late! Breen was striding at it, thrust his foot at it, walked into the cabin and stared at the Bishop, who was stripped to pajamas, and one of the men from for'ard.

"What are you doing here?" said Breen to the man. The latter gave him a hot oath, and then collapsed. So swift and light-seeming were Breen's fists that the result was amazing. The Bishop merely stared up, his jaw fallen.

"Get for'ard and stay." The order, and a kick following it, sent the man staggering out, holding himself amidships and grunting with pain. Breen swung on the Bishop, his eyes narrowed.

"And you, with lights going against orders!"

"The port's curtained, sir—" began the Bishop.

"Stow it," Breen snapped. "I've no time to waste in talk. I don't know or care who you are, though I can guess. You keep to your cabin till morning, or I'll put you under lock and key. Once we're safe at sea, I'll take you in hand. Until then, keep out of my way."

"It doesn't occur to you that you might have trouble?" said the other softly.

"Try it and see. If your light isn't doused in one minute, I'll have you put under arrest and laid for'ard."

A slow grin grew upon the lean face of the Bishop. Breen turned on his heel and walked out, going to his own cabin. He got his pipe and pouch, and went back to the bridge; the light in the Bishop's cabin was out.

BISHOP? Nothing of the sort; Stafford, of course. Gaffney had been expecting him. Trussed up the real Bishop at Aden, took his belongings, and slipped away. Played the part well, too.

Yet there was a terrific deal to be explained. This ship, Stafford's connection with her, with Gaffney, with Yusuf the agent—everything. Breen had the feeling now of an explosion sure to come. He could not understand why Gaffney would serve with such a man as Stafford.

Once again he chanced upon conversation in the darkness, and this time with deliberation, coming up the after ladder and approaching the bridge from aft. As he came to the open port door,

he heard Gaffney speaking to the helmsman.

"Just so it aint no English craft to overhaul us; that wouldn't do by 'alf, it wouldn't! Eyetalian or French, all right. We've got orders. No blasted dago outfit matters."

"What about him, sir?" queried the Yorkshireman.

"Who? Oh, 'im! Well, 'e's a bit of all right," Gaffney replied. Breen realized it was himself mentioned. "Proper master 'e is—knows 'is business. I dunno; 'ave to ask the skipper. Trust 'im for that."

SO Gaffney was not alone in knowing the identity of the alleged bishop! Breen swallowed hard, then resolutely thrust the affair from his mind. He needed all his alert concentration now to handle the ship; he could afford no distraction.

With a careless whistle, he approached and entered the bridge-house.

"Bearing close to Perim, Mister?"

"Two mile is guesswork, sir. Looks like it's near that, bli' me if it aint!"

The night glasses confirmed this; the white flash was close. A ship was coming out of Perim roads and heading north—a destroyer, by her lights and speed. Another, over in the Large Strait, was bearing steadily south, a glitter of lights denoting a P. & O. or Khedivial liner.

"All looks clear," said Breen, satisfied. "Two mile, I make it. What say?"

Gaffney used the night glasses, and nodded. "Aye, sir."

"Half speed, then; hold the light a hundred and thirty-three."

The reports on the lead came steadily. Breen was sure of his depths now, sure of his position. The *Nurredin* swung into the blackness of the narrows. Flashes of white fire glimmered along the wake, and the land loomed close. It seemed like mad folly, so near were the shores. Gaffney stood motionless, tense, breathing hard.

"Gor bli' me! We're myking it!" he muttered abruptly.

Making it, indeed. Nine fathom, eleven, sixteen—the reports came as fast as the lead could be swung and tallied. The fifteen-second flash was abeam, was falling away. Obstruction Point was passed. Breen drew a deep breath of relief, and could afford to relax now.

"Flash on the water to port!"

The word came aft. Breen hurried out, swept the water with his glasses.

"Looks like a craft of some kind. Not half a mile away."

He picked up the dark blotch; a trickle of phosphorescence fell away from her—a screw was turning. No bulk of a hull and spars— Suddenly his heart leaped.

"Stop the engines, Mister—and quick about it!"

"Aye, sir."

Damn that engine-room telegraph! The tinkle of the bell sounded clear and plain. A flash on the water again, a glimmer of light for a moment. Then a splutter, a sudden burst of light, the broad beam of a searchlight swinging and settling upon the *Nurredin* in a white glare that brought an irruption of oaths from aloft and aloft.

"Submarine," said Breen, turning from the rail. "Sub, waiting here under the island; and she's got us."

THERE was no swell at all, and little current, under the lee of Perim Isle. The two craft lay almost side by side.

The Italian lieutenant who came aboard with half a dozen men was a handsome young fellow, very polite, very firm, and with argument unanswerable.

"Molest the British flag?" he said in reply to Breen's protest. "My dear sir, nothing of the sort. You have contravened all sea-regulations by steaming along without lights. We have every right to examine you. Doubtless you have a reason; if your cargo is not as your manifest states, we'll take you across into Assab Bay for further investigation. It is very simple, you comprehend."

Too cursed simple altogether, thought Breen. He was caught; that was all.

One thing astonished him—the acrid hostility between his men and the Italian seamen. True, relations between the two countries were badly strained, with warlike moves in the air, with the destiny of Europe trembling in the balance against that of Ethiopia; yet the swift reflection of this racial trouble surprised Breen, who was not accustomed to the sharp emergence of nationalism. His men were quite helpless, it is true; but they could snarl, and snarl they did.

"You have no arms aboard?" queried the officer.

"None, to my knowledge," Breen replied.

"We will soon make certain." The Italian dispatched some of his men, all the crew being mustered forward. He checked them, checked everything, while

all the time the searchlight's ghastly glare pricked out each detail of the deck and men.

Upon this scene stalked the Bishop, now in all his glory of gaiters and clericals. Breen listened in dry amusement to an outburst of torrid British wrath, against which the polite Italian was quite adamant. When the officer got the report from his searchers and found there were no arms aboard, Breen seized the chance to give the Bishop a sardonic thrust.

"Look out he doesn't find your knuckles and persuader, My Lord."

The other shot him a furious glance, but had no chance to reply. The Italian requested that Breen remove the forward hatch.

"Do it yourself if you want it off," said Breen calmly. "I protest against this search and seizure of a ship under the British flag; I am, unfortunately, helpless."

"You are," and the officer smiled. "In fact, I don't mind telling you that we had advance information that this ship was loaded with contraband." And with this shot, he ordered his men to get off the hatch-cover. He spoke perfect English, did this Italian; and beneath his pleasant exterior was the iron arrogance of the new Italy.

"You will like Assab," he said, with a jerk of his hand as though the Eritrean harbor lay close by. "We're transforming it into a fine place. Of course, My Lord Bishop, we'll transfer you to the first ship for Djibouti, or we may land you there if you prefer being put aboard the submarine."

"Thanks very much; I'll remain here," said the Bishop.

Breen's thoughts flew back to the scrap of talk from Gaffney. The men had their orders; it didn't matter if an Italian ship overhauled them. Why?

"Too damned cocky by half," muttered Mr. McNeill, lounging to one side. He spoke with a certain dour satisfaction, it seemed to Breen. Odd!

ABOARD the submarine, an antenna had been rigged, and wireless was crackling rapidly. The seamen in the hold called out; the lieutenant went to the hatch and flashed an electric torch into the depths. He stepped to the rail and fired a volley of rapid Italian at the submarine; an officer there made response.

"Easy does it, Chief." The voice of

the Bishop, who had joined McNeill at the rail, reached Breen very faintly. "We have to know, first, what they'll do. All depends on that. Number Two Lifeboat, you say?"

"Aye," grunted the chief.

Fresh volleys of Italian from the submarine. Breen bitterly reflected on the trap into which he had walked so assuredly and confidently. Full information from Mocha, a sub waiting here to nab the steamer if she came by either channel, and no use protesting about it, either. Contraband was contraband.

Stafford and Gaffney might not know these waters too well, but they were far from being fools. And dour McNeill. "Easy does it, Chief." Stafford, in his bishop's guise, had nicked the Italian spy that afternoon in Mocha; he had been recognized, in his own words. The Italians, too, were looking for him. Why, then, was he taking it so calmly? Why had he, a brutal murderer of repute, allowed the Italian to live and send out word regarding the ship? From the involved mass of contradictory detail, the feeling rose afresh to worry Breen; there was more to this than he knew.

"Hear that, Chief?" Tense, low, the Bishop's voice again came to Breen. "They've got the orders; that settles it. In an hour, more or less."

"Aye," said the Chief again. "Better silence the men."

The angular figure of the Bishop moved forward to where the crew stood grouped.

HE gave them Christian counsel; their mutters and oaths died out. Breen, watching in the glare of white light, saw them settle into a resolute, dogged silence. The Italian seamen were putting on the hatch-cover again. All six had not only side-arms but rifles.

Their lieutenant approached Breen.

"Sir, we have received wireless orders to convoy you to Assab," he said. "I will remain aboard with my men. Do you refuse to handle your ship?"

"I do," said Breen. "Even under protest, I'll do no such thing."

"I am sorry; it means I must ask you to remain in your cabin under arrest. The rifles below, you understand: the charge is grave. Perhaps your officers will be less hard-headed?" The Italian looked at Gaffney, Lewis and McNeill. The Bishop came up and spoke hastily.

"Under arrest, sir? A British officer? However, we're helpless in the matter. I sincerely trust the other officers and

crew won't make it harder for all of us. Had you not best reconsider your decision, Mr. Breen?"

"I'm master here," Breen rejoined curtly. "I act as I see fit."

"Come, gentlemen; time presses." The Italian looked at Gaffney. "Do you agree to handle the ship as usual, under my orders, or not?"

"Aye, sir." The giant meekly touched his forelock. "No need to lock us up, sir. We'll tyke orders from you as long as you're giving 'em."

"Sensible fellow. Here, Captain." He motioned to Breen. "Kindly go to your cabin and remain there, with this man guarding the passage." One of his seamen saluted and stepped up to Breen, who shrugged and obeyed the order. A single rifle, much less half a dozen, and the guns of the submarine, could dominate the situation.

FROM his cabin porthole Breen could look out at the submarine and its blinding eye of light. Listening to the voices from above-decks, he realized that the *Nurredin's* lights were lit, felt the vibrating shudder of her engines, saw the searchlight extinguished. The two vessels, side by side, headed out to round Perim Isle.

Breen switched off his lights and stretched out, to rest if not to sleep. He could not quiet his brain and the hammering, insistent questions. Lifeboat Number Two—why? Both McNeill and the Bishop evidently understood Italian; but what of that? Over and over, queries that made no sense. . . .

A sudden sharp knocking at his door. He leaped up, switched on the light, and opened, for the door was unlocked. The cook stood there, covered tray in hand; his eyes dilated and staring. The Italian seaman, who had laid aside his rifle in favor of his pistol, was glowering.

"I told 'em you hadn't e't today, sir," chattered the man, who was in the grip of some incomprehensible but tremendous terror. "Listen, sir—you got to reach the bridge! I can't. You got to stop him: Mr. Stafford, sir. You got to tell him the men have been put for'ard under guard, and the hood closed; and Mr. Gaffney is locked in his cabin, and nobody can't reach the lifeboat—you got to stop him, stop him—"

The Italian guard cut short this amazing volley of words with a flow of Italian. He snatched the cover from the tray, to reveal coffee and a plate of sandwiches.



The Italian seaman came erect—too late. Breen was already upon him, smashed into him, and the man went through the opening.

He ordered the cook to leave it, with one eloquent gesture.

Sweating with terror, the cook stepped in and put down the tray.

"Stop him, I tell you, sir! Him and Mr. Lewis are alone on the bridge with them dagoes. They'll try it sure. They don't know that the men can't—"

The guard gave the cook one swipe across the face that shut him up, jerked at his pistol, and spat out an order. The terrified man fled. The guard growled at the astounded Breen, and slammed the door shut.

Stop him? Stafford? Stop him from doing—what? Obviously, the desperate cook had risked everything to give this warning, thinking no doubt that Breen was fully aware of affairs. . . . The life-boat, again. The men. Gaffney locked in. Surely Stafford was not so mad as to try and recapture the ship, with that

submarine less than a thousand yards to starboard?

Breen went to the port and stuck out his head. Feet stamped the bridge overhang just above; a voice broke forth in Italian. Then came the voice of Mr. Lewis, shrill with excitement.

"He's signaling the sub now that he wants to speak her, sir—"

He? The Italian lieutenant, of course. Speak the submarine—and why was Lewis so cursed excited about it? Breen hesitated. He knew he could not leave the cabin; he went to the tray, picked up the coffee and gulped it, black.

Drunk? He doubted it; the man was in the grip of mortal terror, for some reason; Breen frowned. All of a sudden his light blinked out. He went to the port, and as he did so, was conscious of increased vibration—straining, pulsating effort. The engines had been quickened in speed. The old tub was shaking with the vibration.

Breen strained his eyes. The sea was dark; no sign of the submarine's lights. The ship was swinging about, was hurtling its dead weight through the water. From the deck overhead broke out excited voices; then, from the water, the sudden appalled screams of men in frantic outcry, two or three together.

A wild tumult of voices—and then a sudden lifting shock that stopped Breen's heart for an instant. He had felt that lift before now, when keel surged on coral; but it was no coral. He was flung off his feet, hurled headlong into a corner of the cabin. The bows of the ship lifted and settled again, with a frightful crunching crash.

Then shots burst forth from the bridge-deck. The hammering bark of a pistol, and a second pistol echoing it. . . . All silent again. The engines ceased abruptly, but something swung and shook the whole ship, as though some gigantic whirlpool sucked at her. She righted, and floated, surging a little. Breen picked himself up. After a moment his cabin light came on again. He threw himself at the door, but it had jammed hard and fast. A lift of angry Italian voices sounded from the passage.

With sickening soul, Breen could guess what had happened. Outside, the glare of a searchlight from the bridge of the *Nurredin* was sweeping the black waters. Breen stared out; there was nothing to be seen, except the one thing most fearful of all: A widening scum of oil that spread and spread in naked, empty water.

THE searchlight vanished abruptly. His cabin door was shaken; a hoarse voice cried at him to open. Impossible; that terrific wrench of the whole ship had jammed the door. A body hurtled against it, rifle-butts crashed into it; the door splintered and gave. The Italian lieutenant, a bloody rag about his head, pistol in his hand, stood in the opening. One of his men was beside him. His eyes blazed at Breen, blazed with horror and dismay and wild fury. He spluttered unintelligibly for a moment, then found his English.

"You'll be hanged for this!" he almost shrieked. "By God, you'll be hanged!"

"You forget yourself," said Breen, his voice agitated. "Whatever has happened, I know nothing of it. Upon my honor."

That word jerked the Italian back to sanity. He gestured with his weapon.

"Perhaps. Come along. He wants you. Then you don't know—"

"I could guess," said Breen. "You mean, we rammed the submarine?"

The officer nodded. His face was ghastly to see.

"That—that accursed Bishop—bishop of hell," he uttered shakily. "That man, that fiend! Gone, with all hands. Every man. And me, they tried to kill! Come, I tell you. Look after him. After them both. Save them for hanging, if you can."

Breen stepped into the passage, followed to the door of another cabin. It was that of the Bishop—of Stafford. He was violently thrust inside, and the door was slammed and locked behind him.

BREEN found difficulty in getting control of himself. Yet the blood and death here at hand, before his eyes, wiped away memory of what had occurred beyond his sight.

Lewis lay here, and the Bishop—a bishop no longer, but a man naked to the waist, blood-smeared—Stafford the murderer.

Poor Lewis was dying. He lay on his back, gasping out his life, blood dripping from his riddled body. Hardly any use even bringing him here, thought Breen, and then dropped on his knees beside the other man. A single bullet had gone through the body of Stafford. He was quite conscious, and a grim smile touched his lips as he met the eyes of Breen.

"Look after Jem Lewis first."

Breen glanced at the other man; the white features had now become carven ivory, the pulsating breast was stilled.

"Dead," he said quietly. "Hold on, now."

Pillows from the bunk, a sheet rapidly stripped up, and he was at work. The bullet had gone clear through Stafford on the left side and low, probably missing the lung. It was bad. Whether it would prove mortal or not, Breen could not tell.

"Iodine in the locker," said Stafford.

He winced when it was applied, and sweat stood on his forehead, but his eyes held steady. Compress and bandage, pillows under his head, a mattress off the bunk, and he was comfortable as might be.

"Your job now," he said abruptly. "Got a cigarette? Look in the locker. Tin of gaspers there."

Breen produced cigarettes, lit one for him, another for himself.

"Don't be a fool, Stafford," he said quietly. "You've done enough damage."

"You don't understand," the other rejoined. "It's your job now. Got to be done. I don't know yet why the men failed me. And Gaffney—"

"Locked up. And the men for'ard," said Breen. "The cook tried desperately to warn you. I didn't understand. He was too late about it, anyhow."

"Oh!" An unexpected warm glow lit the thin features of Stafford. "So that was it! Breen, they're the finest bunch of men going; you'll never meet finer. You've got to put through the job for their sakes."

"Never mind," said Breen. "Enough folly for one night."

"Man, you don't understand!" The dark eyes blazed suddenly.

"True enough. Talk, if it'll help any."

"You've heard stories about me—police after me and so forth," Stafford said. "You don't know the rights of it. These men do. They were all in my crew on the *Chiltern*. She ended up on the reefs outside Malindy, down the coast. We had a lot of stores and war stuff aboard for Ethiopia, and three Italians in the crew. Quartermaster and two seamen. They tried to set us ashore and succeeded. This was before the war actually broke. I shot 'em."

STAFFORD paused, caught his breath, gasped a little.

"The truth, Breen. Dying men speak true," he said, and paused.

Breen sat tense. The truth indeed; and more, a new and strange man talking to him, all pretense wiped away.

Suddenly he began to understand, indeed. There was personal affection in the loyalty of Gaffney and the other men. Something in Stafford evoked it.

"It may sound queer," went on Stafford, "but to secure the chance of this ship and cargo, I had to act quick, sink all my money. The men, these men, threw in with me. No time to go before Admiralty courts and get wound up in red tape. That could come later. If we put over this cargo, it meant everything to all of us—a fortune. I took the chance and skipped; had to reach Mocha somehow. The men had no trouble, of course. But all sorts of charges were laid against me by the Italians. The consuls down the coast, you know. I had threatened and talked too much, unfortunately."

Stafford paused for breath again, puffed at his cigarette, and dropped it. Breen set heel on ember and remained silent.

"We heard about these Italian subs; I swore I'd get one if they got us," said Stafford. "All hands were for it. Pistols and rifles are in the stern of the Number Two boat. When McNeill gave us full speed and shut off the dynamos, that was the signal. The men were supposed to be armed. I laid out the officer; Lewis took the seaman who was on the bridge. Unluckily, we didn't hit hard enough. That officer is a good man. He shot me and—and poor Jem. I think old McNeill's dead; there was shooting down below. But by God, we got the sub! Probably bashed in our bow plates—"

He closed his eyes and lay breathing slowly, heavily. Then, all of a sudden, his lids came wide.

"Hanging business now, Breen, for all hands," he said. "You too. Can't let those men down. Doesn't matter about me any more; but those fellows are true blue. You must do it, somehow."

The eyes closed again.

"I made him speak the sub," muttered Stafford. "Told him I'd give him the location of two other gun-runners in exchange for freedom. That made him speak her, gave us our chance to turn the trick—time had to be right—timing right—timing—"

The voice faded out in a sigh; he had dropped off to sleep.

Breen sat in the grip of fascination for a little. Then the spell broke. He went to the switch, turned off the light, and opened the porthole. Reality came rushing upon him. There were the stars, and the dark sea, and he was looking off upon the course the ship should be taking. But it was heading westward for Assab Bay.

There lay cold reality. Lucky if he and the others were hanged, indeed; when this night's work was told, Fascist ferocity would know no bounds. So Stafford was no murderer! Yes, dying men speak true. With success would come certain rehabilitation when these men told their story of past events. But with failure, the man's name was damned.

GOOD man, Stafford! Realization of his story stirred Breen, tingled in his blood. Now he saw truly. But what could he do? Nothing. Gaffney's cabin was on the other side of the deck; the men were locked up forward, Number Two boat was berthed on the bridge-deck above; and the Italian lieutenant with his six men remained. Guards scattered about the boat. One at least on the



"Just a minute," interposed Breen. "You forget—me. . . . I'll kill the first man who moves to obey your order, Stafford!"

engine-room gratings. Two forward, one aft, one on the bridge, one in the passage here. The Arabs down in the black-gang were not in the affair at all, doubtless.

Then, as he stood, Breen realized that he was actually looking at the stars. The port had not been fastened; it had been overlooked. Once before, on a bet, he had easily wriggled through a porthole.

He felt himself pushed by invisible forces. "Can't let those men down." No, that wasn't it at all. His thoughts struggled frantically: "Be honest about it, damn you! Your own neck's at stake. This crew is nothing to you, and your neck's everything; you're the one to sink or swim by it."

Breen knew he could sneak out there on the dark decks, get aft, reach the bridge and Number Two boat. He was not worried about the risk of it, but about the thing itself. Once he reached the guns—then the bridge was his with two shots. The ship was his. It was

nothing except pressing a trigger, one way you looked at it. . . .

Breen slipped out of his clothes, retaining only his shorts and shoes. He drew up a chair and stepped on it, and wormed headfirst through the opening. He stifled an oath as his knees banged the sharp metal rim of the port, then slid. Down on his hands and over, very neatly, without a sound.

The ship's lights were on. The passage was lighted. Up forward, as he peered, he discerned activity. Lanterns on the deck, the heavy hatch-cover propped up at an angle, a light down below. He heard the Italian guard come out of the passage, saw him a dozen feet away; the man came forward, looked down at the well-deck, stood there.

And Breen knew he could not do it. The heat of fight was one thing. Cold-blooded murder was another. . . .



speaking with the men there. Excitedly he counted those men. Four, and the lieutenant. That left one at the wheel, one in the engine-room. The others were here, all of them. He could hear their excited speech, then saw the young officer stoop, his head still bandaged, and go down into the hold.

Damage, of course. The ship must have stove in her bow-plates, down below, when she rammed. The Italians were at work there—all of them, except one man who remained by the hatch-coaming, leaning over, staring down.

Breen swung around and darted into the passage. He was on fire now, blazing with eager excitement, as he came to the door of Gaffney's cabin. The key was in the lock. He turned it, wrenched at the door.

"Gor bli' me, what d'ye want now, ye bloody devils? —Oh!"

Gaffney stood there like a gorilla in the light, blinking. His head was black with dried blood; he had been brutally mauled. No matter. Breen said swiftly:

"One man's on the bridge. Go up the after ladder—attend to him. I'll release

Suddenly, without warning, the whole situation changed.

Breen realized, as he crouched in the shadows, what was going on. He heard the Italian lieutenant call from the break of the bridge, just above; heard the reply in sharp, urgent accents.

The lieutenant came down the port ladder, hurriedly. He flung an order at the passage guard, who joined him. Breen dared to look. He saw the two of them going to the forward hatchway,

the men. No time to talk. Move! Move, blast you!"

Then he was gone, to catch the flashing instant of opportunity ere it passed. One look was enough. The man leaning at the hatchway had not moved, was watching intently what went on below. A lantern was beside him. The voices below lifted in muffled sound.

Breen reached the well-deck silently, then flung himself forward. He caught a glimpse of tools there on the deck, of rifles lying there by the lantern. The Italian seaman turned at his step, and came erect—too late. Breen was already upon him, smashed into him and shoved, and the man went over, down through the opening, with a shout and a crash.

Breen caught up an ax, swung it at the prop, knocked it away. The huge heavy cover fell with a tremendous crash. Already Breen was darting for the fore-castle hood, whose doors were closed and fastened. He smashed at them with the ax, splintered them with repeated blows.

Only then did the seaman on the bridge, the helmsman, take warning. He came rushing out to the bridge rail, shouting; lost muffled voices were shouting from the forward hold. The Italians there were trying to get the cover off, were moving it. Breen brought down his ax for the last time, then leaped to put his weight on the hatch.

A shot burst out below; the bullet barely missed him. From the bridge, a pistol barked, and barked again—then Gaffney's bellowing roar silenced it. Other shots sent bullets smashing up through the hatch-cover. Breen leaped off hastily. From the fore-castle ladder the men were streaming.

"Bridge and engine-room!" shouted Breen. "Here—two of you! Take these rifles. Send a bullet down, and then clap a stopper on the hatch."

Exultant yells pealed up in response. The ship was his again.

A QUEER scene, this—on the forward well-deck.

The dawn was all scarlet and gold as the sun hung under the horizon, tinting the rich clouds ere it lifted. The sea was smooth and sparkling, empty even of a smudge, as the ship pounded away to the southward and safety. The bodies of McNeill and of Lewis had just been put over in all decency and sea-custom.

Crowded into the bows, bandaged but still arrogant, the young lieutenant and his six men awaited the issue. The

officer alone understood English, and knew what was going on. They were stripped of arms now, and helpless. The arms were all on the other side; these grim-eyed Englishmen who clustered at the rail, watching them, had the arms.

Breen held a pistol; his fingers played with it idly as he stood watching, his gray eyes flitting from prisoners to crew, from crew to Stafford. For Stafford lay on a mattress, propped up a bit, his deep eyes ablaze, a kindling glow in his thin-carved features. No danger of death here, it seemed.

"What about the damage for'ard, Mr. Breen?"

"We've got a tarp pulled about the bows, over the smashed plates," Breen said calmly. "The pumps are holding the water all right, I think."

"What about these dagoes?" went up a voice. Gaffney strode out and stood beside Stafford, his battered features ugly in the new light, and lifted his voice.

"Aye! Wot about our necks?"

"Stow your jaw," said Stafford quietly. The giant stepped back with a sullen low growl. Breen met the deep dark gaze of Stafford, and knew this man of iron resolve had decided.

BUT Breen had also decided.

"Has it occurred to you, Mr. Breen," said Stafford, "that there might be any trouble about the disposal of these Italians?"

"No," said Breen placidly and curtly.

"We cannot possibly let them live," said Stafford with a dreadful calm. "They must be executed."

"You shrink from the word *murder*?" asked Breen curiously.

"Never mind arguments. You can understand; your neck will answer as well as ours, if one of those men gets back to tell what happened. You, I, these men—all would be hunted down across the world."

"No doubt," said Breen with a nod.

"Have you any plan for their disposal?"

"Certainly. Give them a lifeboat, plenty of food and water, and let 'em go."

The crew emitted low oaths. Stafford's brows drew down.

"Breen, are you serious?"

"Very." Breen played with the safety-catch of the pistol.

"You've just buried McNeill and Lewis." The quick, sharp voice took on an edge. "These men have seen their shipmates shot down. Even if you

ordered them to let these men go free, they wouldn't obey you."

"They will," said Breen, cocking an eye at the scowling crew. Stafford exploded in an oath of irritation.

"Man, have you gone mad? These are my men, not yours."

"Your mistake," Breen observed. "I'm master of this ship, not you. It's very simple."

"By the Lord! If I didn't lie here helpless, you'd take a different tune!"

"But you do." And Breen nodded affably. "Men, these Italians have only done their duty. They're seamen, as you are. You took the gamble, and you've got to face the consequences like men. Yes or no? Speak up, Mister, for the crew."

Gaffney made response.

"It's us or them, sir, and you know it. Wot Mr. Stafford says, we'll do."

"Oh! You all agree to that?" Breen asked. A harsh mutter of assent met his question. He looked at Stafford.

"Right. That puts it up to you, Stafford."

"If you think I'll not give the order, you're mistaken," snapped the man on the mattress. "Gaffney! Line up the men with rifles—"

"Just a minute," interposed Breen, and met the dark deep eyes. "You forget."

"What?" demanded Stafford angrily.

"Me." Breen's voice lifted a little. He looked at the group of men in the bows, at the young lieutenant, white-faced and silent. He looked back at Stafford.

"What the devil d'you mean?"

"Just this." And Breen's gaze chilled on those dark eyes. "You've got plenty on your soul as it is, Stafford; that such a man should deliberately take on murder is surprising, but I can see you've forced yourself to it."

HE paused. Stafford frowned at him. "Well?"

"These men think a lot of you, don't they? Gaffney is loyal to you, splendidly loyal. I don't blame them for obeying you rather than me, just now. You have their confidence, their affection, their trust. And therefore, Stafford, there's one thing you can't force yourself to do: You can't take their death on your soul, with the rest."

"I don't get you," Stafford said slowly. "I don't understand. Their death?"

Breen nodded, and squeezed the pistol in his grip. He met the deep eyes square-

ly, looked into them, held them in his gaze.

"I'll kill the first man who moves to obey your order," he said simply.

It was between him and Stafford now; all others were swept aside. The man on the mattress lifted to one elbow, an angry flush sweeping into his cheeks.

The very placidity of Breen, with those words, took on frightful menace; his very taciturnity was more eloquent than his threat. He meant it to the letter; this was his only possible course of action. In it, he was thoroughly with- in his rights by sea law.

STAFFORD lay breathing deeply, his hands gripping the mattress. Breen's argument had gone into him like a bayonet; iron as he was, he could be pierced, and he was pierced. If his resolve held, one or more of his men would die. He read it in the voice, in the face, in the gray eyes, of Breen. Upon this instant of crisis hung everything.

"You wouldn't do it! You wouldn't dare!" Stafford muttered.

Breen merely smiled, a little twisted smile of contempt, as though brushing aside the words. That contempt stung, and went deep. Stafford, who had turned very pale, flushed again under the smile and its implication. The hard implacable resolve of the one man met the quiet and equally implacable will of the other, and broke before it.

The sun came up above the eastern sea-rim. It struck upon Breen's face, and the level golden rays brought out hidden qualities there, unguessed because quiet; perhaps because the face of Breen had tensed, had become hard and cold and deadly.

Stafford writhed a little on his mattress. Pain flashed into his features; he let himself down and his eyes closed.

"You win," he murmured, and relaxed.

Breen looked at the men.

"Mr. Gaffney! Order that Arab engineer to stop the engines. Lower one of the boats and make certain the water breaker is filled. You'll see this officer and his men safely into the boat. Understood?"

"Aye, sir," said Gaffney.

Breen saw the men break into motion. He lifted his gaze to the sunrise, and nodded a little, as though to himself. A deep breath escaped him; then he looked down, and slipped the safety-catch of his pistol into place again.

My Corpse Hangs

A strange and stirring drama of America's storm country by a Midwestern writer who displays real ability.

By THOMAS W. DUNCAN

THEY sounded like shots—two shots. Harry Dowgan halted. He heard only the shrill cry of wind in the rickety cornices that lined the street. It was the main street of the prairie village of Flatfield; and though the hour was but a few minutes after noon on a May day, the street was almost dark. Also deserted. He was the only person on the street, so far as he could see. . . . True, he couldn't see very far. The village was engulfed in smoke-colored clouds of dust that the mighty wind had lashed up from the arid prairie.

There were no more shots—only the whistling wind. Dowgan shrugged his young shoulders, plowed on. The dust, fine and stinging, peppered his copper hair, whirled into his ears, begrimed his freckled twenty-two-year-old face.

The stores which he passed were empty—the business men had locked up when they went home to lunch. No point in keeping open during one of these dust-storms; trade would be at zero. Farmers wouldn't drive in through such a dirt blizzard; they knew too well how grains of dust would sift into a revolving motor and ruin it. . . . Dowgan stopped before the office of Clyde Hoag. The attorney would be in; he suffered from rheumatism, and always had his housekeeper prepare a lunch which he ate in his office.

Blinking, snorting dust from his nose, Harry Dowgan closed fingers over the knob of the office door. The wind almost ripped it from his grasp. He plunged inside and shouldered the door shut.

"Whew! Worst one of the season!" he exclaimed, and turned.

Attorney Clyde Hoag hadn't heard. Attorney Clyde Hoag would never hear again. He was dead.

"Why—golly—" Dowgan swallowed. "Golly," he repeated, and stepped toward the desk.

Sprawled across the flat top was the lean body of the sixty-year-old lawyer, the scrawny fingers of his right hand curled about the handle of an old-fashioned revolver.

"Shot himself!"

But almost immediately Harry Dowgan reversed his judgment. He spied something on the floor, a few feet in front of the desk. A revolver. Spattered about it were little crimson dots.

Dowgan did a very foolish thing. He picked up the thirty-eight, staring at it. Then he gazed at those splashes of blood. They led into the back room.

His breath coming in little jerks, he tiptoed toward the inner office threshold. He could hear the wind, screeching madly outside, flinging dust against the windows. He paused. The partition door stood ajar. His fingers hovered over the trigger; then slowly and cautiously he shoved open the door.

Empty.

Empty and very still, that room, the silence accentuated by the gale outside. In a corner stood a tall iron safe, its door sagging open, an untidy mass of papers spilling out from its looted maw. Dowgan caught sight of something peeking from beneath the litter of documents; he knelt to look closer.

It was a crisp new twenty-dollar bill. Whoever pilfered the safe had missed it. He let it fall, pawed hastily the other papers. A stiffly folded document shuffled beneath his fingers. It was yellow as gold, and bore an engraving of a steaming railroad train:

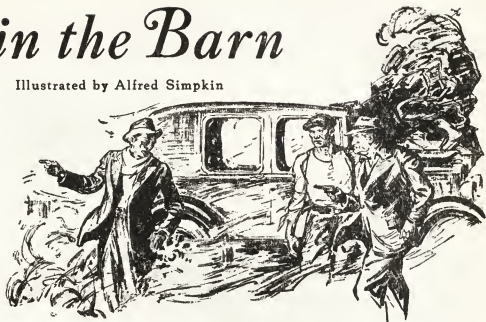
Minneapolis, Fargo & Pacific, 4% gold bond, due June 1, 1968. Serial number 106003.

They had missed that bond too.

HARRY DOWGAN heard his heart thumping. About to rise, he saw something more familiar than bonds and twenty-dollar bills. It was a newspaper

in the Barn

Illustrated by Alfred Simpkin



"They're after me," Dowgan blurted. "Don't let them get me, will you?"

clipping from the latest issue of the *Flatfish Weekly Clarion*, and the heading ran:

UNMASKED BANDITS HOLD UP EDGARVILLE BANK

Rapidly his eyes scanned the print. A thought flashed through his brain, but he dismissed it as absurd. Clyde Hoag was none too straight—everyone knew that; but bank-robbing was a bit out of his line. . . . Still, why had he clipped this news item that told of the robbery and the murdering of the cashier? Perhaps he was interested in the five hundred dollars' reward that the State bankers' association had offered; perhaps—

"Well?"

Dry and cold, the voice sounded behind Dowgan. Gulping, he sprang to his feet.

Framed in the back door of the building, which opened on the alley, he saw Constable Ben Croy.

In a rush of relief, the breath left his lungs. "Golly, Ben, you gave me a scare! It's a good thing you came," he added.

"Yeah, it looks that-a-way."

Ben Croy did not answer Dowgan's smile. He was a big man, large of belly, with a drift of frosty hair showing on his forehead beneath the shoved-back brim of his black hat. Harry Dowgan thought he had never seen Croy's eyes so

steely cold. He stepped inside, nudged shut the door.

"Where's Hoag?"

Something in Croy's manner made Dowgan's lips very dry. He licked them. "Hoag is—he's dead."

Croy's broad face did not change expression. But something happened to his eyes. There in the ill-lighted office, they seemed to sharpen and glint, like the tips of icicles reflecting a match-flare. Slowly, they moved from the younger man's face, down to the revolver. It occurred to Dowgan then that he had done a foolish thing in picking it up.

"I'll have that," Croy said.

"Why, yes, Ben—I—" Dowgan handed it over quickly, as if it were hot.

"Now we'll have a look at that front room."

UNDER Croy's thick-soled shoes the floor creaked. When he saw what was at the desk, he halted, staring.

"Listen, Ben: I think we ought to—to get a move on. Whoever was in here can't be very far away. They couldn't drive—not in this." Dowgan waved a hand at the trembling windows. "This dust plays hob with a motor. . . . I think you ought to send out a call, and round up a posse maybe, and—"

Croy's broad face swung round; his cold eyes drilled Dowgan.

"What was you doing at that safe?"

"If you want it in plain language," said the constable, "I'm going to lock you up for killing Clyde Hoag. You're under arrest."



Despite himself, blood flooded hotly to Dowgan's cheeks. "Well, Ben, I—Maybe I'd better tell just what I heard and saw. You know when Dad died, he left us the farm with eight hundred dollars against it. Hoag held the papers. The interest was due today, and I was coming in to pay it. . . . Down the street, I heard a couple of shots—"

Croy nodded. "Mrs. Wells heard 'em too." He jerked a thumb at the ceiling—Mrs. Wells had rooms above the lawyer's office. "She phoned me—"

"Same shots I heard. Well, I came in here and found—Hoag. Then I saw that gun. I thought maybe whoever had done it was still in the back room. They weren't, but—well—you saw how they'd left the safe. I guess they must've gone out the back way. . . . And I think you ought to get a hustle on you, Ben. They can't get very far in this storm, but we ought to start looking for 'em."

"I've looked far enough."

FOR a second Dowgan did not understand, and he told Croy so.

"I mean," the constable said, "that when you catch a mouse eating cheese, you don't walk away and start hunting in the parlor for the mice there."

"But—"

"If you want it in plain language, I'm going to lock you up for killing Clyde Hoag. You're under arrest."

The dingy office seemed to sway curiously about the youth; breathing was difficult.

"But Ben! You *know* me! You know I'm not the kind— You—" He faltered; his voice broke in sheer disbelief.

"I think," the constable said, "that you didn't have the price of the interest. So you shot Hoag and was looking for those papers against your farm. But Mrs. Wells had phoned me, and I was too slick for you."

"Here—look!" From his pocket, Dowgan snatched folded currency. "I *did* have the price of the interest, and there it is—sixty-four dollars. Guess I ought to know how much is there, the way I've skimped, and—"

Ben Croy pocketed the bills. "You'll get them back," he answered Dowgan's protests, "*after* you've stood trial. And now—"

There was one thing left to do—as Dowgan saw it. He must clear himself by finding the murderer—or murderers—of Clyde Hoag. And he couldn't do that locked in the Flatfield jail. No use to argue with Croy—he was too inflated with importance at making one of his rare arrests; Croy's being constable was the result of petty politics—the party rewarding a lifelong member with an office that for the most part, in this law-abiding township, was an empty title.

Swiftly these thoughts lit Dowgan's brain as he saw Croy trundling toward him.

"Come along!" Croy grabbed his right arm.

Farm work had made Dowgan's muscles tough servants. He shot to tiptoe, whirling half-about, ripping his arm from Croy's fumbling fingers. His left fist struck Croy's right wrist; the revolver clattered to the floor. His right fist whizzed toward its target—Croy's stomach. The fist, going fast, buried itself in the jelly-soft flesh.

Ben Croy doubled up like a fat boy who has eaten green apples.

And as Harry Dowgan darted through the back office and slammed open the alley door, as he plunged into the mass of whirling dust that bedeviled the town, memory of Croy's awkward posturing brought a smile to his lips. But the smile was grim, and it vanished almost as soon as it came. For the realization swept him that he had resisted arrest, attacked an officer. He was suspected of murder, and he was running away. He—Harry Dowgan—was a fugitive—a man to be hunted and harried, to be captured—alive, or dead!

DOWN the alley Harry Dowgan ran, his head low, his eyes slitted against the dust-clouds, handkerchief at his nose. At first he ran wildly, with no thought except escape; but soon he was turning over and over in his mind a plan whereby he might get at least a hazy idea as to the murderer of Clyde Hoag.

The killer, he reasoned, must be close at hand in the village. Or if he had fled, he must have fled in a car. In that case it should be easy to discover which way he had gone, for no one would drive in this storm without desperate cause. The dust quickly ruined a motor.

At the foot of the alley, which opened on the State road that ran east and west through town, he turned and stumbled to Charley Dorf's filling-station. Shifting ridges of dust lay ankle-deep on the driveway; as he opened the door, a swarm of dust blew in with him.

"Lo, Harry," Charley said. "Looks like we might be goin' to have a dust-storm, don't it?"

Harry Dowgan dug at the begrimed corners of his eyes.

"Charley—a man would be a fool to drive in this, wouldn't he?"

"He'd be more than that if he thought anything of his car. He'd be a lunatic.

... Well, there's at least two of them loose."

"You mean—"

"Why, yes. I saw a couple of fellows driving a big blue sedan past here ten-fifteen minutes ago. They won't get far."

"Who were they?"

"Don't ask me. I'd never seen 'em before."

"Which way did they go?"

"East. Drivin' east like they was in an all-fired hurry. I— Where you goin', Harry?"

Out into that dry blizzard Dowgan plunged, fighting his way eastward. If only he had a car—some special kind of car that would resist the storm! He glanced south and dimly made out the steel tracks of the railroad. The railroad and the State road ran side by side over the prairie. If—

He cut across a vacant lot and approached a low red shed. He put his ear to the wall and listened. There was a rumble of voices. The section-hands had returned to shelter to eat their lunch. Rounding the shed, he saw their hand-car standing a few paces from the door. If he could hoist it onto the track without being seen—

The wind was howling a gale, flapping his trousers about his calves, tearing dustily through his hair, battering at his hat. He gripped the hand-car, lifted it. . . . Its flanged wheels were snug on the track when he heard a shout. Flinging a glance over his shoulder, he caught sight of the section boss emerging from the shed. Storm-muffled words reached his ears:

"Hey—boys! Some one—stealing—the hand-car!"

The boss broke into a run.

But Dowgan threw his weight against the car, and with legs working like pistons, pushed it down the track and leaped aboard. He snatched at the pumping handle, working it wildly. Once he looked back. The trotting section-hands were ghostly and receding in the murk.

"I'll—have to get—those two fellows, now," he thought as he toiled.

First he had punched Ben Croy, then stolen a hand-car.

"Gosh! They'll have enough against me to put me in the jug for a thousand years!" he reflected.

UP—down—up—down. . . . It became a chant in his brain and in his muscles, that ceaseless up—down—up—down of the car-handle. The wind was at his

back, and that helped. The wind, with its great load of dust, staggering across the continent, engulfing all. . . . Up—down. . . . Up—down. . . . Sweat broke out on his forehead and coursed in grimy streaks along his cheeks.

Alongside the tracks the highway ran, a ghost road, half-buried in the dust. He kept a lookout for a car—a blue sedan with two men—and saw nothing of it. Only the empty road, only the dust.

Up—down; up—down. . . . Flakes of dust tickled the rims of his eyes, sifted up his nose and down into his lungs. He coughed. . . .

Dimly at first, blurred by dust, and then plainer, he discerned a car in the distance. As he approached, he noted that it was a sedan. The hood was up, and the dust-wrapped figures of two men were standing by its side.

He did not glance in their direction again. He let the hand-car coast a little past them, to a halt; he dismounted and lifted it off the track. His heart was thumping; he didn't know what he was going to do. He was unarmed, except for his fists. He would have to use his wits.

He stumbled across the shallow ditch of the right-of-way and crawled through strands of barbed wire. Then he lifted his head and acted for the first time as if he saw the men. He stopped short.

One man was about twenty-eight, with ropy blond hair and a thin blond mustache. His brown eyes were close-set on either side of a thick nose. From the waist up, he was stripped to his undershirt, and his right biceps was bound with a bloody strip of cloth. His left hand held a fat brief-case.

The other man held an automatic, and it was trained on Harry Dowgan's stomach. He was short and thick-set, with a thatch of black hair.

"Let him have it, Blacky," the younger man muttered from curled lips.

"They're after me," Dowgan blurted out. "Don't let them get me, will you?"

HE had said the first thing that flashed into his mind—anything to detain Blacky's trigger-finger.

"After you?" Blackie grunted. "Who?"

A plan shot through Dowgan's head; he opened his eyes wide so the whites would show round the irises; his jaw sagged; and he let his arms dangle listlessly.

"The keepers—at Arrow Crossing. . . . I choked one and got away—this morning." He grinned vacuously at them.

"Arrow Crossing?"

"Where the asylum is. . . . It's full of crazy people. They were all crazy but me. The keepers were craziest of all. They were going to strait-jacket me again. . . . I got away."

The blond man's lips moved. "We don't want this screw. Better give it to him."

But Blacky did not shoot. "I've got an idea, Joe." He thrust the automatic into his coat. "You come along with us," he told Dowgan. "This car's done for." He nodded toward the smoking motor. "But we don't have far to walk."

"Blacky! For crying out loud! We don't want—"

Blacky's mouth went hard. "Joe, the hinges of your jaw are too loose. Who's running this?" He motioned to Dowgan.

DOWGAN shuffled nearer, his jaw continuing to sag.

"Well," Joe growled through his thick nose, "what are we going to do with this car? Are you just going to leave it where everyone—"

"I've thought of that too. I think of everything. You just leave things to me. . . . This car's been hot, and it's going to be hotter." He turned to Dowgan. "Help us tip this boat over in the ditch."

They rounded the car; Blacky opened the door and took out a red can.

"After she's tipped, I'll douse her with this gas."

Dowgan was between them, Blacky at the front end of the sedan, Joe at the rear. That brief-case looked interesting. If he could get it— But even so, if he took it to Ben Croy without also producing this pair, Croy would never believe that he had not stolen it from Hoag.

"All right," Blacky commanded curtly; "heave!"

Joe placed his left hand against the car; Blacky dug his feet into the road and pushed with all his strength; and although Harry Dowgan pushed also, his thoughts were otherwise occupied. The car rocked; and at last, as it toppled and crashed, Dowgan pivoted on his right foot and smashed a fist into Joe's Adam's apple. Joe staggered back. Harry swung round and threw himself at Blacky. His left fist plowed into the man's middle, and his right fist zipped toward the fellow's jaw. *Smack!* Blacky spun half round like a ninepin hit by a bowling ball, and his kneecaps cracked against the road. Harry dived on top of his back. Blacky was yelling. He threshed

beneath his assailant's weight and hammering fists. His hand streaked into his coat. Harry Dowgan made a lunge for his gun hand. But just then something hard swatted him a terrific blow on the back of the skull. His head felt like a power-house struck by a thunderbolt. There was a blaze of pain like terrible lightning—then blackness. . . .

Somebody was doing something to his feet. . . . His feet seemed far away—far away; and he was lying at the bottom of a deep black chasm where the winds screamed forever. His eyes opened, and bitter memory rushed over him. He saw a man named Blacky standing with an automatic.

He elbowed himself to sitting posture. He had a splitting headache—Joe must have flung a chunk of rock—and through the pain he heard Blacky:

"Don't try any funny stuff. You fooled us once, but you won't again. You're as sane as me."

In the ditch, the tipped-over car was a scarlet mass of wind-whipped flames; and the man named Joe was kneeling and doing something to his feet. He was tying his shoe—but why?

Joe grinned. "There now. You won't run *very* fast, you lousy louse!"

Dowgan blinked—his feet looked odd—and then he saw that Joe had put the left shoe on the right foot, the right one on the left.

Blacky said, "Stand up!"—and when Dowgan hesitated, the man swore and repeated the command.

Uncertainly, his head reeling, Dowgan inched himself erect. The wind still blew a gale—a dusty deluge. In their wrong shoes, his feet were pinched; it hurt him to stand.

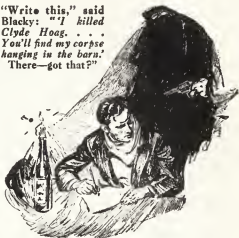
"Put your hands behind you," Blacky said.

As he obeyed, Joe took from Blacky a pair of handcuffs and snapped them on the prisoner's wrists. His brown eyes glittering, Joe stepped in front of Dowgan and called him a foul name; his left palm swished and struck him a smart blow on the mouth.

"Time for that later," Blacky said. "Let's go. You lead, and I'll keep him covered."

THEY struck across a field. Blacky walked just behind, with the automatic, with the brief-case. Like invisible harpies the wind snatched savagely at Dowgan's clothes and flung dirt into his face. To walk in the tight, wrong shoes

"Write this," said Blacky: "*I killed Clyde Hoag. . . . You'll find my corpse hanging in the barn.*"
"There—got that?"



was agony; dust drifted in dunes round his ankles; sometimes he stumbled. His head was crammed with evil little gnomes who gleefully pounded tiny hammers. His eyes smarted, and dust caked his lips. And yet, in that turmoil of dust and pain, he found strength to wonder whether he was being led, and what was to happen to him. How much did his captors suspect him of knowing? Were they going to kill him? If so, why hadn't they done the job while he was unconscious? He thought of Ben Croy and the section-hands—had they taken up the chase?

A FARMHOUSE loomed in the dusky murk—the old Eversby place. Clyde Hoag had held the mortgage and foreclosed—it was now deserted. And as Dowgan was prodded across the yard and into the house, a flash of understanding lit his brain: Clyde Hoag must have engineered that Edgarville bank-robbery. Blacky and Joe had held up the bank and holed in here, lying low for a week. Without exciting suspicion, Hoag could have met them here and taken the loot to his safe, so that if officers searched this farm, they would find no evidence. Then to-day, the pair drove to Flatfield. While Blacky went through the safe, Joe guarded Hoag; when the lawyer grabbed his gun from the desk drawer, grazing Joe's arm with a bullet, Joe had killed him.

"Take off his bracelets," Blacky commanded when they reached the parlor.

Dowgan rubbed his freed wrists and looked about. The room was furnished with an old deal table and two battered chairs.

"Sit down. You're going to do some writing," said his captor.

While Blacky stood with the automatic, Joe tossed a scrap of paper and a stubby pencil to the table.

"Now," Blacky said, "you write what I tell you."

The man knit his brow for a moment's thought; outside, the wind still blew, but with less vigor: the storm was wearing itself out.

"Write this, and sign your name: '*I killed Clyde Hoag and stole the Edgarville bank loot from his safe. Me and my pal did the job. When I got back here, my pal and I argued and I croaked him. The jig is up and I'm scared. I've buried him and the swag where you won't never find them. You'll find my corpse hanging from a rafter in the barn.*' There—you got that?"

Harry Dowgan's mouth was dry. "Yes, I—"

"Now sign your name."

Dowgan hesitated.

"Sign it!"

When he had obeyed, Joe picked up the paper. "He's wrote it just like you said."

"Good." The fat man nodded. "Now stand up. We're going to a dance—in the barn. You're the fellow who's going to do the dancing—and your feet won't be on the ground."

Fingering his throat, Dowgan swayed to his feet. They were going to hang him! Hang him, and beat it with the loot. Ben Croy and the posse would never look farther—they would find his note, and think him a robber and murderer—while Blacky and Joe escaped.

"Get a move on!" Blacky growled.

OUT of the parlor and through the messy kitchen Dowgan stumbled, his head throbbing, his feet aching, his stomach sick. In the yard, he noted that the wind was fast dying, the dust-clouds thinning. Croy would take up his trail—find the deserted hand-car, the abandoned burned auto. And at last find him, when his lips were lifeless and he was unable to clear himself. . . .

Led by Joe and followed by Blacky, Dowgan dragged his feet across the yard and entered the ancient rat-infested barn. Joe pointed at the ladder leading into the haymow, climbed it himself, and waited above while Dowgan climbed at the urging of the fat man's gun.

Dust lay thick on the bare floor; in one corner a length of rope was coiled in a heap of old hay. Joe snatched the rope and flung one end over a rafter. While Blacky guarded the prisoner, Joe drew

the rope taut, knotted it, and then tied a dangling slip-noose. He stepped back, viewed his handiwork with smiling satisfaction, and disappeared through the aperture where the ladder led to the ground floor.

"Better say your prayers," said Blacky.

Joe returned with an old milking-stool, which he placed beneath the noose.

"All set."

Blacky made a motion with his automatic. "Stand on it."

Dowgan was staring at his shoes.

"I've been thinking," he murmured.

"Your time for thinking is about over. Stand on that stool."

Dowgan swallowed, shrugged. "O. K. But the way I see it, you want to put the blame on me for Hoag's being robbed and killed—so you can get away and not have the country hot with the law looking for you. All right. But won't the law think it's kind of funny that I put my head through a noose while I was wearing the wrong shoes?"

Joe nibbled his lip; Blacky blinked, then swore softly and said: "You get them shoes changed, and changed quick!"

AS he sat down, Dowgan wondered if his captors could hear the excited beating of his heart, and notice that his fingers trembled as he unlaced his shoes. They were heavy work-shoes, thick-soled, stout-heeled. He removed the right one, then the left. His hands hovered over the shoes, and he said:

"I've been thinking some more, too. If the law trails us here and finds me alone and shot instead of hanged, they would think that was funny. They'd scour the country, then. And if they caught two strangers, they'd have two murder raps to put on them instead of one."

"Never mind about so much thinking," Blacky growled. "They're going to find you hanging—"

"Then," Dowgan said, "you'd better not shoot me."

And he bounded to his feet like a jumping-jack.

One shoe he hurled full into Joe's face. The heel smacked his left temple, and the flying laces snapped across his eyes. Yowling, he stumbled backward. Gripping the other shoe's toe, Dowgan whizzed it in a short powerful arc, clubbing the heel upward against Blacky's gun. At the same instant he arched his shoulders, pulled down his head and drove his body toward Blacky. The explosion of the discharged gun almost broke his eardrums,



backward, and once when he brought down his foot, there was no floor to hold it, but only the thin air of the square hole. He squealed like a stuck hog as his red face and threshing arms dropped from sight.

Dowgan spun round on his toe in time to see Joe coming. Joe was coming fast, pumping his knees high like a hurdle-jumper. He was using his knees as

Dowgan pulled down his head and drove toward Blacky. As the man toppled backward, Dowgan butted him again toward the hole in the floor.

weapons, and one knee's target was Dowgan's groin. Dowgan jerked his body aside and whammed down the shoe's heel. It struck Joe's knee. Something cracked like a kneecap being shattered, which was precisely what it was. Joe doubled, yipping, hugging the smashed cluster of pain, and Dowgan swatted his skull with the shoe-heel. He crumpled like a tangled parachute.

Dowgan heard from behind a sharp wheeze of labored breathing, and turned to see Blacky's pain-twisted face in the square hole, one hand clinging to the wall ladder and the other sliding the automatic into view.

but he felt no bullet. Like a goat he butted his head full into Blacky's belly, and as the fat man toppled backward, still clutching the spitting gun, Dowgan butted him again toward the square hole that opened to the ground floor. Arms waving, yelling, kicking, Blacky skidded

At that gun-hand, Dowgan heaved the shoe, and in the same movement he leaped from the floor, his body soaring and dropping over the aperture. His knees crashed down on Blacky's shoulders, and his fist smacked Blacky's fingers where they clutched the ladder. Then they were in the air together, falling; and in that shattered second, Dowgan realized that he was underneath, and that if Blacky's weight landed on top of him, he'd be done for. His arm shot out; he crooked his elbow round Blacky's throat, and at the same instant a tremendous twisting, like a cat's turning in midair, writhed along his muscles.

Blacky's body smacked the ground floor, cushioning Dowgan's fall.

Head whirling, sweat streaming from his face, he rose and tottered to the door. . . . He saw Ben Croy leading a dozen men toward the barn.

"There he is," Croy shouted. "Hey! You're under arrest! We found your note, and—"

"And now you're going to find the fellow who dictated the note," Dowgan said. "And the fellow who killed Clyde Hoag. And what they took from Hoag's safe."

After the moaning Joe and the unconscious Blacky were handcuffed, after the brief-case had been emptied and its contents identified as the Edgarville bank swag, the section boss protested:

"You did a good job, Dowgan. But just the same, I don't like the idea of having you steal our hand-car. We let one bird steal our hand-car, and pretty soon our hand-car aint never where we need it. We lose an afternoon's work, and I don't like—"

"Would five dollars make it all right?"

"Uh—well—"

"Would ten?"

"Why, yes, I—"

"I'll give you ten dollars," Dowgan said, "as soon as I collect a piece of money that's due me. Reward money. Five hundred dollars."

"Well, say now, that's mighty nice—"

"Or wait," Harry Dowgan said, "I might as well pay you now. I just happened to think that Ben Croy, here, has sixty-four dollars of mine in his pocket. Ben was a little fast in taking hold of it. Guess it was the most money he'd ever seen together at once. How about it, Ben?"

Ben Croy grunted words that no one could understand, but he produced the sixty-four dollars.

Son of

As an Arctic explorer Mr. McConnell is one of the few living men to know the polar bear well: hence this unusual story.

By BURT
M. McCONNELL

KOWOK, a fuzzy white ball, lay curled against his mother's shaggy coat. In his tiny veins flowed the blood of a thousand generations of Arctic kings. Outside the cavern, the Great White Desert stretched from Alaska to the Pole. From its cold and cheerless surface swirled long, wavering lines of drifting snow, waist-high and as fine as tropic sand. To the southward a saffron sun shone weakly through the murky haze. To the northward drifted the ice-pack, with its millions of broken cakes upraised like sails to catch the roaring winds.

Months before, Ikoo-too had hollowed out a hard-packed snowdrift on the right bank of the Sharavanoktok. Now the ice-covered river's towering banks, their steep sides blown clear of snow, gleamed darkly against the spotless white. Outside the den, the world was bleak and overcast, but in her icy cave the mother-bear reclined in comfort, her cream-white hair effectively insulating her against the frigid blasts that howled down the breathing-hole in the roof.

Ikoo-too had hibernated since November; it was now late in February. Her cub at birth had been a blind, hairless mite, weighing not more than two pounds. Now, at the age of six weeks, he was as large as a full-grown raccoon. Of the seven cubs the old she-bear had brought into the world within the last eleven years (including two sets of twins), this one was by far the finest. His fur was the whitest. In time—if he survived—Kowok would weigh as much as a horse and be at home equally in the water or on land.

the Arctic

Without warning there rose, with a terrific drumming of wings, a score of feathered creatures.



Illustrated by Walter Wilwerding

At the end of the sixth week the cub opened his eyes upon a world that was chill and gray. His mother watched him struggle to his feet, and stumble awkwardly about the cavern. Within the next day or two he was climbing over her recumbent form, biting her ears and chewing at her under-lip. His stubby, rounded little ears, tiny pointed black nose, sharp but as yet insignificant milk-teeth and curved black claws had grown amazingly.

Late one afternoon the old she-bear, gaunt and crochety from the twin ordeals of fasting and motherhood, shuffled to the center of the den, below the vent, gathered her feet under her, and gave a mighty upward heave. The roof bulged outward, then fell in with a crash. Clambering over the uneven blocks of snow, she crept unsteadily out into the crisp air, on the first of a series of daily foraging expeditions. Crossing the frozen surface of the waterway, she browsed for half an hour on reindeer moss, sometimes digging through a thin crust of snow, and greedily swallowing the icy particles that clung to the moss and melted in her cavernous mouth. Her first meal in more than three months!

EARLY in April there came through the opening the first warm breath of spring. On two or three occasions Kowok had attempted to follow his mother in search of food, but she had promptly and firmly vetoed the move. On the first day of spring, however, his spirit flared up in revolt. For perhaps an hour after his mother's departure the cub lay on the moss, revolving in his immature and

none-too-agile mind a plan to climb out of the gloomy den. Bravely he scrambled over the trail to the top of the snow-drift.

About him was a vast domain blanketed with snow and scintillating in the afternoon sun. Just above the mountains he saw a shining orb which not only seemed to be the source of all light, but which apparently was responsible for the comfortable feeling of warmth that enveloped him. No sound shattered the peaceful serenity of this chill fantastic land. Kowok stood on his hind feet, as he had seen his mother do on emerging from the cavern, and looked about with half-closed eyes until he became accustomed to the light. Then, frightened a little at the immensity of his mother's Arctic empire, he retreated into the den.

The cub was dozing in the farthest corner when he became aware of a slight noise—footsteps—on the roof, and a thin, menacing shadow across the entrance. His sensitive nostrils detected the odor of some strange animal, an odor that was charged with peril. Swiftly and silently the shadow moved. A sniffing sound struck terror to Kowok's heart. Instinctively he shrank closer to the rear wall, hoping the marauder would not hear his wildly beating heart, and wishing that his mother would appear. Even when the inquisitive visitor trotted off, after a few more sniffs, the cub remained at the far end of the cavern until his mother returned.

The entry of the old she-bear was usually somewhat slow and impressive, but now she rushed blindly into the den, and over to where Kowok crouched, still

While his quarry slept, the hunter hitched forward; each time the seal lifted its head, his visitor was a few feet closer. In the Eskimo's mind was the need for food.



trembling from his narrow escape; she had caught the wolf scent. Fondly she licked his spotless coat, and examined him for possible wounds. In future she would take him with her on her wanderings over the tundra.

Late the following afternoon Ikoo-too clambered out of the opening, turned about, and indicated to the cub that he was to follow. Snow—millions of flakes, like the great breast feathers of a Canada goose—was drifting lazily earthward. It was the cub's first glimpse of this phenomenon. Greedily he licked the flakes that fell upon his nose. Ikoo-too rose to her full height, about nine feet, and gazed searchingly in every direction; her offspring imitated every movement. But it was the frozen sea that the mother bear scrutinized longest; seals would soon be swimming about in the open leads and lying on the ice.

Ikoo-too started toward the Great White Desert. Her shoulder-blades slid smoothly under the loose and unkempt skin. Behind her trailed the cub. His feet were tender, and he stepped gingerly, picking his way carefully over the hard-packed snow. They followed the river in its tortuous course to the Arctic sea. When the cub felt the need of a liquid to supplement the milk which his mother provided so generously, he scooped up a mouthful of snow, as he had seen her do. He was learning to take his place in this glistening white world.

THE bear-cub's second intimation that their peaceful domain was peopled by other living things came the next morning. Without warning there rose from a clump of stunted willows, with a terrific drumming of wings, a score of white feathered creatures. The cub instinctively sought the shelter of his mother's forelegs, marveling at her composure. Nor did he emerge until the ptarmigan were out of sight, and the danger, as he saw it, was past. Then he

followed her toward a high knoll, almost bare of snow. Narrow winding trails crisscrossed the spongy soil. These were the innumerable runways of the lemming. Following his mother's example, Kowok sniffed at these narrow trails. Like her, he dropped flat on his belly at the first sight of a tiny rodent scurrying along, unaware of the danger that lurked in its path. As the little Arctic mouse came opposite, the old she-bear clamped a fifteen-inch paw upon it, gently tightened her grip, and carried it, squirming, to the cub.

Kowok was not particularly hungry, but the instinct to kill surged in him. As his mother released her grip on the squealing mouse, he pounced eagerly upon it, and sank his slender white teeth into the back of its neck. The vertebrae snapped, and the lemming grew limp in his jaws.

This was the cub's first taste of blood.

Ikoo-too had put her digestive system in order, and now she craved the warm, firm red flesh of the seal, with its juicy outer layer of blubber. Lemmings were tasteful enough, but it required too many to make a meal. From the tundra she could see the Great White Desert gleaming in the sun. She turned toward it, followed by the cub.

When at sunset she curled up in the lee of a mossy mound, Kowok stood guard faithfully for half an hour, rising frequently to his full height to survey his surroundings. He felt that he was a big bear, and ought to protect his mother and relieve her of worry and responsibility. A short distance away he could see a knoll, such a spot as his mother usually selected for a lemming hunt. He had never captured a rodent by himself. Here was an opportunity to show his mother what a great hunter he was. The cub felt very brave as he made his way to the knoll.



Ikoo-too cautiously raised her head; a moving object caught her attention. Kowok felt his mother grip the ice and he too raised his head to see what caused her concern.

Half a dozen of the sleek little animals were hurrying along the pathways in search of food. The cub pounced upon the first to come within striking distance, and devoured it on the spot. A second and a third went the way of the first; then the cub, his appetite for the moment appeased, lay at full length on the moss. According to his mother's code, a nap was always in order after a meal.

Kowok had barely decided to join the old she-bear, when he experienced a strange feeling that he was being watched by hostile eyes. Timidly, but with a surprising amount of determination for one so young, the cub sprang to his feet. A hasty glance in the direction of his mother showed him that she still slept. In the opposite direction, and less than twenty feet distant, two sharp, malignant eyes were peering over the rise!

The blundering cub, taken by surprise, whirled in his tracks and was about to beat a precipitate retreat when the blood of a thousand generations of Arctic kings reasserted itself; he faced about, ready for battle. The interloper, nonplused at this quick maneuver, stopped. Silently they eyed each other. The fur of the Arctic fox was even whiter than his own, and a bushy tail streamed out behind.

With all their senses of sight, smell and hearing, the two felt each other out, like feinting boxers. Then, abruptly and without really intending to do so, Kowok bared his teeth. Everything in this Arctic world moved aside for his mother; this snow-white intruder must do the same for him. The fur along his neck stood almost upright. The fox, much to his amazement, turned and ran.

Kowok, his eyes flashing fire, swaggered over to his sleeping mother. No blood had been shed, but he had won his first victory. Moreover, he had learned a valuable lesson: that the best defensive is an offensive, that the price of peace in the Arctic is war. The setting sun shone feebly over the boundless waste, tempering the cold light of the day. Above, on broad outstretched pinions, soared a snowy owl, his coal-black eyes, with their gleaming yellow irises, taking in every detail of the treeless plain. The snowy owl was the king of the air in this northern world, just as the old she-bear was queen of the ice, water and land.

Kowok watched this merciless bird of prey circle above a mossy mound, dive suddenly, stretch forth his shining black talons, grasp one of the short-tailed lemmings and fly away. The snowy owl was an incarnation of nature's unchanging law—that the strong shall prey upon the weak. . . .



The blundering cub was about to beat a precipitate retreat when the blood of Arctic kings reasserted itself; he faced about and without really intending to do so, bared his teeth at the fox.

An hour after sunrise the old she-bear roused the cub and led the way toward the coast. They reached the edge of the land-fast ice late the evening of the second day, after the most strenuous trek in the cub's existence. It was Kowok's first glimpse of the Great White Desert, on which his ancestors for uncounted generations had made their homes. Spotlessly white, stretching for a thousand miles toward the Pole, it lay glinting in the dying rays of the sun. Here and there, on the jagged surface, the disintegrating influences of sunlight and spring zephyrs could be seen in pools of fresh water, where huge snowdrifts and even the tops of the ice cakes had melted.

The old she-bear swung her long, narrow head from side to side, scrutinizing the rough ice-prairie in each direction. Out on the drifting pack she and her cub would be reasonably safe. In the numerous open-water lanes she could hunt the toothsome seal and teach her offspring to swim—two requisites of their summer program. She looked forward to a plunge in the icy water; to patient vigils at seal-holes; to stalking the marine animals as they basked in the sun; to pursuing them under water as they flopped into the sea. The hours of darkness steadily were growing fewer; soon the sun would not set at all, except for perhaps an hour or two beyond the rim of their sparkling world. Already the days were becoming unbearably

warm for travel, but at night the Frost King still waved his magic wand over a million square miles of drifting floes, making their surfaces as hard and brittle as glass. She sniffed the warm, moist air, sweeping gently off the pack.

Ikoo-too and her cub drank noisily from scattered ponds, sucking up the water like a mare and her colt. One of these crystal-clear pools filled a particularly large depression in the ice; it was cool and inviting to the mother-bear—her first opportunity to bathe in six months. Stepping to the edge, she waded in. How refreshing, as the frigid water penetrated her matted fur!

KOWOK followed his mother's example—as he did in all things—until the strange, chilly medium reached almost to his little paunch. Then, thoroughly scared as the water swirled about his stubby legs, the cub backed out. He had never attempted to swim. Later in life, of course, he would be amphibious—the only member of the bear family equally at home in the water or on land. But at the tender age of three months he was still strictly a land animal.

Sitting at the edge of the pool, the cub watched his mother as she boldly waded into the deepest part, plunging her head with evident enjoyment under the calm surface, and bringing it out, sleek and dripping. Sloshing through the shallow depths, she descended the gentle slope until she was half submerged. From that point she swam to the center, where the water was deep enough for her to disappear entirely from sight. To the cub, this was an alarming maneuver; apparently his mother had been engulfed by this sinister element! Anxiously he ran around the edge of the pool, hoping

to get near enough to aid her without plunging into the large and unfathomable body of water.

Kowok, alarmed by his mother's predicament, was running aimlessly about the edge, uttering mournful cries, when the old she-bear broke the surface and stood upright. The cub's delight at the reappearance of his mother knew no bounds. Whimpering, he trotted down to the edge. The cold water, eddying about his legs, made him pause. A little panic-stricken, Kowok backed out for the second time. Standing at the edge, he could see the bluish-white ice at the bottom. Gingerly he planted one forepaw in the pool, then the other.

Inadvertently, however, the cub had selected a steep and slippery shelf. Almost before he realized what was happening, he plunged in over his head! Glancing desperately in his mother's direction as the waters closed above him, Kowok sent out a cry for help. His mouth immediately filled with water. Choking and spluttering, he came to the surface, thrashing wildly with his forefeet.

Much to his surprise, Kowok found that he not only was keeping afloat, but gradually nearing his mother. She had now stepped out onto the ice, and stood watching with growing solicitude the erratic and rather frantic motions of her offspring. Her dark eyes flashed with pride as the cub, vigorously paddling "dog-fashion," touched bottom. Eagerly he scrambled up the incline, shook himself like a water spaniel, and stood up on his hind feet to lick his mother's face. But the old she-bear was not demonstrative by nature. Her cub was being reared in a hard school. To coddle him now would tend to lessen his chance of surviving in later years. . . .

In the diffused light that preceded the dawn, Ikoo-too and her cub started, early the next morning, along the northerly edge of the land-fast ice. They tried to pierce the misty veil that lay beyond, but the open water was hidden by fitful clouds of frost-smoke, where warm air from the surface of the Arctic sea came in contact with the cool wind that swept over the ice.

Had she been alone, the mother bear would have plunged into the frigid depths. Somewhere to the northward—it might be thirty yards or thirty miles—lay the drifting pack, where she would be comparatively safe; no Eskimo hunter ever ventured far from shore. But her

chubby offspring was a handicap, for he had not yet learned to swim well enough. The season was getting late; already myriads of duck and geese were filling the air with their raucous clamor.

As the mist cleared, she could see the drifting pack a hundred yards distant, and on its surface dark spots which she knew to be seals. She was hungry; and just before noon they moved to the edge of the open lead, where a large cake of ice thrust a shelf under the gray-green depths. This was Kowok's first glimpse of a large body of water, and he was rather awed by the calm glassy expanse. The shimmering white face of the opposite floe fascinated the cub; it was sheer and smooth, as if carved by a giant cleaver. Through the air, now crystal-clear, the snow-capped pressure ridges, stretching away to the horizon, glistened like frosted jewelry in the noon-day sun.

INTO the open lead slid the mother-bear. Without warning or even a glance at the cub, she swam, with a powerful crawl stroke, toward the opposite field. With her black-tipped nose raised slightly above the surface, with her broad hair-covered pads and sinewy forelegs cleaving their way through the water, she proved that the polar bear is the most efficient swimmer of all the land-dwelling animals.

Kowok, abandoned at the water's edge, did not appreciate this demonstration. Never in all his life had he been separated from his mother by such a wide and impassable gulf. He did not trust this brackish element, strange and chill, in which his mother seemed perfectly at home.

Arriving at the opposite field, the old she-bear drew herself up onto the ice and tried, by every subterfuge known to her, to persuade the cub to swim across. But Kowok remembered too vividly how, in his enforced immersion, the cold water had pressed in upon him from all sides. Swayed by indecision and fear, he galloped along the edge, whining plaintively.

With ill-concealed impatience Ikoo-too finally plunged into the water and swam back to the land-fast ice. Kowok rose to his hind feet as she approached, and licked her face eagerly. His mother was not going to desert him, after all!

The old she-bear bore this demonstration of affection with her accustomed indifference, but she did not lose sight of her objective—which was to teach Kowok



to swim. Gently she backed away, as the water dripped from her matted fur. The cub followed her down to the sloping shelf, where she indicated, in no uncertain fashion, that he was to enter the water. As the youngster hesitated, she stepped carefully into the open lead. This was the last straw; the cub, fearing that she was going to leave him again, slithered down to the water's edge, grasped his mother's tail between his sharp little teeth, and held on grimly. Slowly and smoothly she struck out toward the drifting pack. Kowok, with only his short rounded ears, black little nose, and half-closed eyes showing above the surface, paddled instinctively. Puffing and spluttering, choked by the salt water, but quite proud of his courage and perseverance, he arrived at length at the opposite field.

FOR the first time since the birth of her cub, back in January, Ikoo-too felt that they were safe. Hereafter, until the coming of fall, they would do their traveling between sunset and dawn; it was easier and safer to travel at night.

The mother and cub had proceeded less than fifty yards when a booming sound

shattered the peaceful silence of their icy domain. Ikoo-too had heard such a sound before; it was the sharp, spiteful crack of one of those murderous smoke-sticks carried by the little brown people who walked on two legs and dressed in the skins of caribou. Ikoo-too had no fear of any four-footed creature in the Arctic, but there was one enemy, crafty and tireless, whom she sedulously avoided—man. Crouching flat on the ice, she placed a restraining forepaw on the inquisitive cub. There came another report, and Kowok felt his mother flinch as if she had been struck.

EACH spring she saw Eskimo hunters on the ice, or with dog-teams and sleds along the coast. She had seen smoke, white and feathery like the breath of a caribou on a winter day, float from the end of an Eskimo's long stick. Once she had seen several musk-oxen stumble and fall, following a great roaring and smoking of these sticks. The acrid and irritating fumes had drifted down-wind to her sensitive nostrils, and since that time Ikoo-too had associated smoke-sticks and Eskimos with danger; even death.

Now she cautiously raised her head. A moving object, sprawled on the ice, caught her attention. It was one of the little brown men, shoving his weapon ahead of him as he hitched himself along in the direction of a sleeping seal. Kowok felt his mother stiffen and grip the ice with her long ebony claws; he raised his head to see what was causing Ikoo-too so much concern. He could see, a considerable distance ahead of the hunter, a grayish-brown animal lying on the ice. After a short nap this strange creature would raise its sleek, bewhiskered head, make a quick and apprehensive survey of its icy surroundings, and drop to sleep again. The two-legged creature, meanwhile, was imitating the seal's tactics—with this exception: while his quarry actually slept, the hunter hitched forward a few feet; he was leading the sleeping seal to believe that he, the hunter, also was a seal. Beside the animal a slippery runway led to the depths below, where neither man nor the seal's traditional enemy, the polar bear, could follow. Each time the marine animal lifted its head, his visitor would be a few feet closer, but this seemed to cause the seal no uneasiness. Once the two-legged creature scratched his ribs with one hand in imitation of the seal. When

the unsuspecting animal again lay down, the indefatigable hunter wriggled forward, simulating his quarry in every action. Uppermost in the Eskimo's mind was the need for food for his family, waterproof boots for himself, and blubber for lighting the igloo and feeding the dogs. The seal would furnish all these.

The hunter finally approached close enough for an easy shot, without even being suspected of treachery. Then, as the seal lowered its head for another nap, the Eskimo dropped all pretense, squatted in the snow, rested an elbow on one knee, and peered along the dreaded smoke-stick. There followed a reverberating roar. Ikoo-too shrank back, and the cub, trembling a little, nestled closer to her for protection.

Dropping his weapon, the Eskimo ran forward, grasped a flipper before the seal should slip down into the depths, and hauled the dead animal to a level spot on the ice. Then, in the belief that seals allow themselves to be killed because they crave something which only a hunter can provide, such as fresh water, he went through a strange rite. First he scooped up some water from a melted snow-pool and poured it into the dead seal's mouth. According to Eskimo belief, a seal is always thirsty, since it is obliged to live in salt water. It would therefore permit itself to be killed by any hunter who would give it a 'drink of water in return. And woe be unto the hunter who should neglect to perform this rite, for all the other seals beneath the ice would find it out, and would not permit themselves to be killed (even for a drink of water) by that particular hunter!

Ikoo-too knew nothing of Eskimo beliefs; she and her offspring knew only that one of the much-feared brown men had poured a small quantity of fresh water into the seal's mouth, and had disappeared behind a ridge, presumably in search of another victim. From her

vantage-point she could see a number of marine animals basking in the sun. She knew from experience that it is difficult to stalk a seal lying beside its hole; when the animal is not searching the surface of the ice for its enemies, its ears are close to the floe, trying to detect the sound of footsteps.

But the old she-bear was hungry; her cream-white fur made it difficult for a seal to see her, except at close range; the soles of her feet were covered with hair to keep her from slipping on the ice and to deaden the sound of her footsteps. But the most important reason of all for stalking a seal was that Kowok must be taught to secure the kind of meat that would provide nine meals out of every ten in the years to come. Lumbering in the opposite direction to that taken by the hunter, they approached to within two hundred yards of a seal without being seen or heard.

Strong as a lion, a better stalker than the tiger, and more patient than the dog, Ikoo-too edged forward, like a cat creeping up on an unsuspecting sparrow. The cub followed her example in every detail. Hugging the ice, with his under jaw sliding along the surface like a sled runner, he trailed behind his mother until they came within a hundred yards of the sleeping creature. Keeping her eyes partly closed and her black snout hidden in the snow when the seal lifted its head; hiding her ebony claws and flattening out her heavy paunch, she timed her deadly approach so perfectly and crept forward so noiselessly that she was not discovered.

When the seal at length became suspicious, and made an attempt to reach the hole in the ice, she was upon him in less than a second. The victim offered no resistance; his one thought was to escape.

WITH a lightning sweep of her forepaw, the old she-bear cuffed the seal just back of its ears, hooked her curved claws into its flesh, and dragged it





away from its hole—all with one circular movement. Placing her other forepaw upon its head, she sank her long, yellowish teeth into its neck. The faint snap that followed told her that the seal's neck was broken. Retaining her grip, she backed off, dragging the carcass still farther from the hole in the ice. Then she raised her jaws, dripping with blood, and indicated to the cub that he might join in the feast.

There was nothing dainty in Ikoo-too's manner. Placing a heavy forepaw on the seal's back, she began stripping the carcass of blubber. Kowok sniffed inquiringly at the ugly head, with its round dome and bewhiskered mouth. His mother was eating the hair-covered hide, blubber, meat and even bones! The meat was warm, and it had a rich, appetizing odor. Choosing a spot where the hide and blubber had been stripped away, he licked it with an exploratory tongue; it was even more toothsome than the lemming! He sank his sharp little teeth into the flesh, and tugged. A small morsel came away in his jaws, and the cub clamped his back teeth upon it to squeeze out the juice. Out of the corner of his eye he could see his mother ripping away great mouthfuls of the tender meat. Rising to his feet, he shuffled over to the

animal's throat, and lapped up some of the blood. Never again would Kowok be completely satisfied with the milk from his mother's breast; at the age of three and a half months he was a confirmed *carnivore*.

In all, the cub ate perhaps half a pound of the seal meat; his mother consumed more than forty pounds, and under ordinary circumstances, stupefied by the heavy meal, she would have lurched over to the nearest windbreak for a nap. But now there was an Eskimo hunter to be considered; safety lay to the westward. Together the mother and cub ambled along the edge of the drifting pack.

Two miles farther on, a feeling of drowsiness overcame Ikoo-too. The cub was rather impatient with his mother for napping when there was so much to see in this spotless world of snow and ice. He strayed off to the nearest freshwater pool, drank his fill, dipped one paw into the water in the manner of a raccoon, and finally wandered over to the edge of the ice-field; perhaps one of the bewhiskered animals would be swimming in the open lead.

Arriving at the water's edge, Kowok was astounded to see, floating lightly upon the calm surface, a strange craft. In it were some of the little brown men; but they carried no smoke-sticks. Fascinated, he stood there while the occupants of the skin-covered oomiak paddled to the edge of the ice on which he stood, and sprang ashore. They divided into three small groups. Two of the groups disappeared, while a third remained in the skin boat. The cub whirled in his tracks; his mother ought to know about these strange visitors.

BUT the roly-poly little white bear did not reach her side. Moving with an incredible swiftness, the dark-skinned creatures outflanked him, and were now spread fan-wise to cut off his retreat. As the cub looked for an opening, one of them whirled an arm above his head. Kowok started to run, but a noose of walrus hide settled about his neck and was drawn tight. Desperate at the thought of capture, he grasped the thong with his tiny paws, and tried to claw it loose. He weighed about twenty pounds, but he was powerless in the hands of the Eskimo. Two of them tied his feet, and choking and gasping for breath, he was carried to the oomiak. The hunters were taking no chances; they knew from

experience what a terrifying picture of rage a polar-bear mother, deprived of her cub, can make. They paddled a quarter of a mile before they permitted Kowok to breathe freely; at that distance, his lustiest squeals would not awaken the old she-bear. . . . The flat-bottomed boat swished through the calm Arctic sea.

THE two months that followed were the blackest in Ikoo-too's life. She charged up and down the land-fast ice, from Tigvariak Island to Kamarkok. No Eskimo settlement escaped her prying eyes and sensitive nostrils; she circled every one, trying to pick up the scent of her cub. Tireless, without sufficient food or sleep, she roamed about her Arctic domain, a picture of despair. She met other mother bears, with their cubs following obediently behind them; she encountered females with cubs born the year before; she saw one old male in search of a mate. Once these polar bears glimpsed the insane fury in her dark-brown eyes, however, they veered off; cubs crept between their mothers' forelegs, where they would be safe.

One July morning, before sunrise, Ikoo-too clambered upon a grounded ice-floe off the sandspit of Siningarook. She had been here a month before, when the narrow strip of sand, pushed up by the sea ice, was bare and the strip of land-fast ice was a mile wide. Now there were two caribou-skin tents on the beach. The trading schooner that had been hauled up on the land was now in the water; inside, in the lagoon, she could see its masts. The floe from which she scrutinized the sandspit was no more than half an acre in extent; the rest of the ice-field had broken up and drifted away.

On shore all was bustle; figures hurried back and forth. The wind, blowing gently off the land, carried voices faintly to her keen ears, but it carried no scent of her cub.

All that day she lay on the grounded floe, watching, waiting, sniffing, listening. At midnight, when camp-fires had died down and the settlement was wrapped in slumber, she slipped into the water and headed for shore. The midnight sun dipped beneath the horizon, but there still was plenty of light; too much, for there were dogs at the camp. At a point a quarter of a mile from the nearest tent, she classified the numerous odors that came to her nostrils; the scent of her cub was not among them. Millions of

mosquitoes swarmed over the coastal plain, now completely denuded of snow. Ptarmigan twittered in the dwarf willows. A number of half-wild Eskimo dogs lay curled against the skin tents.

Half a mile from the natives the *North Star* lay at anchor; on shore, beneath a bluff, stood the white men's canvas tent. Ikoo-too stood on her hind feet and sniffed; but the wind was not in her favor. She circled the tent without picking up a familiar odor. There yet remained the schooner; silently she waded into the water and struck out, with long, powerful strokes. In the two months just passed, she had tramped and drifted and swum a thousand miles in her unremitting search. Now, as she swam about the vessel, there came, for the first time in all those dreary weeks, a ray of hope. Again she circled the schooner, slowly and warily, raising her head out of the water and giving voice to a low cry. There was no answer; but her sense of smell told her Kowok was on the ship. She called again, faintly, and for the third time swam noiselessly in an ever-narrowing circle. In her sixteen years she had scented many traps; this might be another.

Closer and closer she approached, calling insistently; there was no response. The barking of a malemute struck terror to her heart; further delay might bring both hunters and dogs on her trail. Boldly she swam to the vessel's side, hooked her black claws into the rail, and hauled herself, dripping, onto the deck. She shuffled toward the bow, her padded feet making no sound. Near the foremast she spied her offspring. With a low moan, the gaunt mother-bear hastened her steps, wakened the sleeping Kowok with a thrust of her sharp nose; nuzzled him to see if he had been injured. She sniffed the leather collar and steel dog-chain that bound him to the mast, safe from the prowling Eskimo dogs.

WITH a snap of her yellowish teeth, Ikoo-too severed the collar; her cub was free! Proudly she stood there, marveling at the rate he had grown in those two months. Kowok was now as large as a wolf; in another year he would be half grown, and able to make his own way in the world. To the mother bear, however, he would always be a cub. She nuzzled him affectionately. Her long quest was over. Together Ikoo-too and Kowok slipped quietly over the schooner's side, into the dark water.

ARMS and MEN

By H. BEDFORD-JONES

WHEN I walked into the study of my old friend Martin Burnside, and found him poring over a book, I jeered at him.

"Books!" I said scoffingly. "You, the collector of arms and armor, are now switching to books? Among all these relics of fighting-men, you now turn to the pen?"

Martin Burnside peered at me over his spectacles, reached for his pipe, and stuffed it with tobacco. He shoved the book at me. It was an old calf-bound volume, printed in Italian, and adorned with engravings of naked men who held sword and dagger.

"If you'd get some of your magazine artists to study that book," he growled, "they wouldn't make their heroes curl their fingers around a rapier-hilt, or hold a dagger upside down, as they always do. And if you yourself would study the pictures, you might find one artist who knew how a man holds a rapier—the first rapier ever made, in fact."

I glanced at the book. It was the "Treatise on the Science of Arms" of Camillo Agrippa, printed in 1553.

"The first rapier?" I echoed. "You're away off, Martin. The first rapiers were in use a score of years before this book was printed."

Martin Burnside chuckled. "Of course. And the pictures for that book were drawn nearly forty years before it was printed—in 1517, to be exact. By Michelangelo."

"What?" I was startled. "Impossible! Why, he was a painter and sculptor—"

"And Agrippa," cut in Martin with mocking emphasis, "was an engineer and architect. The two men were friends. One of them invented a new weapon destined to change the whole course of history, or adapted the invention. The other did the same for fencing."

I laid down the book. "There you go too far, Martin," I said almost angrily. "You know better. It's true that the rapier changed the whole system of fighting; but no one knows the inventor.

And fencing was in use a hundred years and more before the date you mention."

"Aint it grand to be so cocksure!" observed Martin with a covert grin. "If I told you that the rapier was in a way invented, or suggested, by an Egyptian pharaoh, you'd probably rear up on your hind legs and squall. Yet you know that the very word comes from the French *rapière* or 'poker,' a derisive name given to the blade."

"What's that got to do with the Egyptians?" I snapped. "Or with Agrippa, either?"

"Everything," said Burnside. "Suppose you mix two long drinks in those tall glasses, with plenty of ice, and I'll tell you a story."

"Any proofs?" I demanded.

He grimaced at me. "Proofs! If I had proofs, I'd write it up for the League for Industrial Democracy or the Medical Congress and get me a leather medal. Go on and mix that drink."

I mixed the drink. Martin Burnside tasted his glass with approval, then relaxed and eyed me appraisingly.

"Do you know," he said, "I've been delving into the history of Rome about that time—the year 1517. It has some wonderful points. A riotous, reckless age of self-indulgence, of murder and outrage, of marvelous artistry. Michelangelo had just finished his great work in the Sistine Chapel; he was not yet forty-five, a big brawling devil who fought with everyone, from the Pope to Leonardo da Vinci. You should see him—a huge broken-nosed fellow shouldering gallants aside, bursting into the private chambers of Pope or Cardinal—a Medici was then on the throne—and in general captivating everyone, frightening everyone—"

And he plunged into the story.

A STRANGE pair, this ugly, massive sculptor who could do anything better than anyone else, despite his black moods; and the young, agile architect who dipped into the most abstruse mathematical and engineering problems.

XV—The Sword of Michelangelo

Another ultra-dramatic story in this brilliant series which follows the development of the weapons by which the fittest of mankind have survived the endless battle of the ages.



"Look you, Giulio! I want a new blade, half the width of this. No cutting edge—a long thin blade, a needle, you comprehend? All point!"



Illustrated by
John Clymer

Gay blades, both of them, haunting the schools of fence, swaggering all over Rome, falling into long spells of work with the fierce and savage energy that consumed them both.

Michelangelo Buonarrotti had shut himself up just then for days, working like a madman on his design for the San Lorenzo frieze. A dreamer of vast concepts, always imagining creations on the most enormous scales, utterly absorbed in his work when he was at it, he completely forgot the younger man until his design was formed and ready to go down in all final details on paper for submission to the Pope.

Then, seeking refreshment and rest, he sallied forth, haunted studio and wine-shop and palace, and came finally on Agrippa seated in the midst of the great piazza before St. Peter's. The Obelisk—that gigantic stone needle, covered with mysterious hieroglyphics, that had been brought to Rome from Egypt—lay there, stretched out on the ground, awaiting some genius, as it had waited

these long years. For no man could figure out how to raise it.

"Ha, Camillo!" roared the huge lusty-lunged sculptor. "Dreaming, or in love?"

"The Donna Ysabel loves me!" Agrippa had laughed exultantly. "Tomorrow night we leave for Milan!"

Agrippa started, leaped to his feet, embraced the older man, a flame suddenly lighting in his eyes.

"Both, both!" he exclaimed. "Look there at the needle of stone! It has given me ideas, thousands of them; I shall raise it into place when I get time; but first I have other things to do. I want you to see the most beautiful girl in the world—"

"Plague take your girls! Wait!" exclaimed Buonarrotti, staring at the Obelisk. "Thousands of ideas, eh? Well, I have ideas myself. Look at the thing! A pointed sliver of stone, a giant's needle thrusting at St. Peter's! If I were a giant and held that thing in my hand—Stop, stop! Look at it—"

He was silent for a moment, his luminous eyes kindling. Suddenly he caught the younger man's arm.

"Come along! First, my idea! Let's put it in train; then this girl of yours. Ha! You'll see! Come along."

AND he urged Agrippa away, out into the streets, back into the city, muttering in his beard and striding hastily along. He turned into a side-street and came to the shop and forge of Giulio the armorer, a Milanese like Agrippa. Into the place he burst like a cyclone, tore out his sword and slapped it down before the startled smith.

"Look you, Giulio! I want it by tomorrow night. A new blade, half the width of this. No cutting edge, all point."

"No cutting edge!" gasped the armorer. "But, Messer Buonarrotti—"

"To the devil with your *buts*!" roared Michelangelo. "You hear me! A long, thin blade, a needle, you comprehend? No edge whatever, but a point—all point!"

The armorer smiled, and reached to a rack of hiltless blades.

"Like this?" he said, and fetched one down. "It has no edge, you see. It is good steel, but thin—so thin it's useless. I made it for an accursed Spaniard who never showed up to claim it."

"The very thing!" The sculptor belovèd his delight. "Shorter than mine—no matter. Set it into my hilt. I'll come for it an hour or two. Bravo! Here's luck, Camillo! Come along!"

He hustled Agrippa out into the street, then halted.

"You see?"

"Devil a bit," confessed the architect, laughing.

"The Obelisk—the needle in the giant's hand!" cried Michelangelo, aglow. "Look you! All swords are made to cut. The quickest, easiest action. But one pokes a fire—eh!" As he spoke, he threw out his arm. "The body's like a chain. The links move—thus! A thrust is like a blow, the shortest distance between two points, the weight of the body behind it. Observe!"

And while a curious throng gathered, he began to caper about grotesquely, arm thrusting forward, until the laughing Agrippa bore him away.

"Explain it at your leisure, good Michel, but now come with me, for I'm overdue. And supper awaits us, a supper of the best. My turn to say come!"

"Aye. And mine to watch over you, as usual, lest some cutthroat ensnare you."

More truth than poetry in this. The slender, handsome young architect was no match for the guiles of the Roman underworld, as Buonarrotti well knew.

Underworld? Of its own sort, yes. A charming little house set among gardens and fountains, all aglow with crystal sconces, rare tapestries, fine linen and silver; Donna Ysabel of the fair slim hands, a lovely precious thing with her slender grace and golden hair and Spanish lisp. Her brother, Don Rodrigo, a tawny, sleepy lion, also of Spain—the old Gothic blood in the blue eyes and yellow locks. In the suite of the Spanish ambassador, this Don Rodrigo; but Buonarrotti was not fooled.

A pleasant evening, with wine and song and talk, just the four of them. The

shaggy Michelangelo fell in with everything, accepted the honors paid him—all the world honored him, so it was but his due. He saw how Agrippa was insanely in love, and in his heart came fear. The brooding eyes of him deepened. Again he felt the old sixth sense that had so often warned him—the swift urge to mount his horse and go, that he had so often obeyed. But now he had no horse; he had a friend, who needed him. He stayed, for once disobeying the impulse.

THREE days hence—nights, rather—at this same house, a masked ball; it was arranged. Agrippa accepted for them both. A party to celebrate the birthday of Donna Ysabel, on whose fair hands the eyes of Buonarrotti dwelt with gloomy scrutiny.

Once away, he dragged Agrippa home with him, made no comment, gave no warning. What use warning a man in love? Instead, he took Agrippa to his rooms, threw off his cloak, seized chalk and paper and began hastily to sketch a figure.

"Look, look here!" he exclaimed. "See the line, the muscles—"

"The *quarta guardia*—but you have the right foot foremost!" cried Agrippa. "It is wrong. Look, my friend. Here is the position. Left foot foremost, always—"

"Bah! Listen to me—look at the muscles, I tell you!" broke in Buonarrotti. "The link movement—the line from left heel to right wrist! None of your cutting and slashing! Here, draw your sword. Give me that broom yonder—"

He caught it up, crossed with the agile sword of Agrippa. A furious enthusiasm was upon him. The blade in Agrippa's hand cut and slashed, but the broom-handle drove in past it, swept it aside, drove home.

"A discovery! You're right!" cried the younger man. "It upsets everything we've been taught, my friend, everything! But you're right. I'll put it into mathematical formulæ—"

Buonarrotti flung his chalk aside, after a few swift sketches.

"The point, only the point; remember the needle," he said. "The links in the body chain—work it out, my friend. We'll try it again tomorrow. Ha! I forgot to get my sword. No matter. Tomorrow's time enough."

"I'll bring it with me in the morning." And Agrippa embraced him. "*Addio!*"

The older man, left alone, worked hour after hour on more sketches—always the muscles standing out, the man in varying positions, always the body forming a chain leading to the outstretched point of steel.

Next morning Agrippa came, saw the sketches, marveled at them. He had made some of his own, for he shared the furious intensity of work that made the Florentine stand out above other men. He pitted his sword, with the cutting edge, against the thin sliver of steel that Michelangelo thrust at him—never a cut, always a thin-pointing and almost invisible lunge, until steel and arm and body seemed one living entity.

And in the minds of both men, but with far different import, lingered Donna Ysabel of the fair, slim hands.

Agrippa was talking eagerly, of a glorious jewel he had ordered as a gift for her, when a messenger from the Vatican arrived. Buonarroti was wanted, post-haste, with as much as he had finished of his design. He caught up his sketches and departed.

All that day, far into the night, he remained with Pope Leo, talking, arguing, disputing with cardinal and prince. It was a day of bursting triumph for him. The designs, which united new concepts of sculpture and architecture in a vista of dazzling splendor, created a sensation; the church of San Lorenzo would be one of the world's wonders.



Yet through it all, like a poisoned needle, pierced the laugh of the Spanish ambassador—the laugh and the word.

"Don Rodrigo? Yes, by the nails of Christ! I know the fellow—a master of fence who fled from Toledo last year with his paramour after murdering two *caballeros*. Look out for him, worthy sculptor! If you see the woman again, ask her, dear señor, whether she remembers Don Felipe de Bazan. She poisoned him, the she-devil!"

DESPITE his triumph, Buonarrotti came home with moody eyes. He saw no more of Agrippa until the following afternoon, when the eager young Milanese burst in upon him.

"*Ecco!* Look here, now—your theory all worked out, Michel! You're right; mathematics prove it. The whole system of guarding must be changed. Any guard where the left foot is extended, as always, offers exposure; but with the right foot foremost, the whole thing is altered. All these artificial postures must be swept away—if the point alone is used, every possible kind of hit can be delivered from one position."

"And Donna Ysabel?" queried Buonarrotti.

The other laughed exultantly. "She loves me, my friend—she loves me! And tomorrow night we leave together, after the ball, for Milan. I had a note from her this morning. She loves me, do you comprehend?"

"You take her to Milan?"

"As wife!" exclaimed Agrippa.

Buonarrotti took a step backward. "As wife!" he uttered in a choked voice. "Bad enough as mistress. Let me tell you, as a friend, what—"

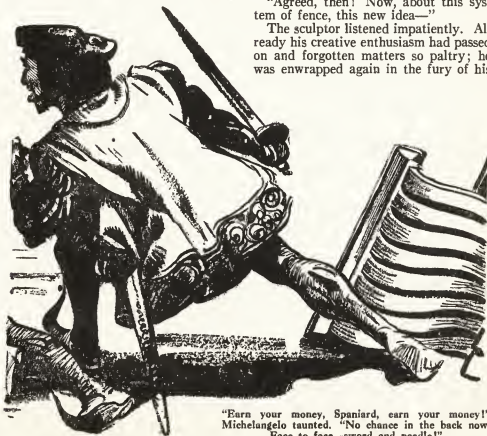
"As a friend, keep silence!" said Agrippa, a stern look flashing into his face. "I know what you would say; she herself told me of calumnies spread by enemies of her family. If you have heard them, keep silence, my friend."

The Florentine smothered an oath. He knew too well that friendship would die swiftly, did he speak; and would die to no avail. Agrippa was caught up on the wings of exultant love, would listen to nothing. A man of this wild, impulsive temperament was capable of anything.

"Very well," said Buonarrotti gloomily. Agrippa clapped him on the shoulder.

"Agreed, then! Now, about this system of fence, this new idea—"

The sculptor listened impatiently. Already his creative enthusiasm had passed on and forgotten matters so paltry; he was enraptured again in the fury of his



"Earn your money, Spaniard, earn your money!" Michelangelo taunted. "No chance in the back now. Face to face—sword and needle!"



With the light, lithe grace of a springing tigress, she plunged the poniard straight at the heart of the Florentine.

designs; his soaring imagination was enthralled in the greater vista of his work. And the net spread around Agrippa tortured him. Why, it was easy to see! The Milanese was wealthy, highly born, and if trapped into marriage would be a ready victim. Rome was the goal of all kinds of sharpers; and he was made for their toils.

Yet Buonarrotti could see no way out of it, except by imperiling his friendship with Agrippa; and from this he shrank. This was one of the few men he admired, with whom he shared his dreams and his work. His bitter, moody spirit recoiled from a vain sacrifice of this friendship. . . . The tumult in his heart told him there was a better way, perhaps. . . .

Next evening Agrippa came for him, attired in bridegroom apparel. He bore, in a bundle, a light domino to fling over his head upon arrival, for this was not the carnival season, and no masking was allowed in the streets. A burly Franciscan admitted him to the chambers of the Florentine. He addressed the monk carelessly.

"Good father, pray tell Messer Buonarrotti that— Good God, man! You! And I never knew you—"

He broke off in dismay, staring. For the shaggy beard of Michelangelo was gone. That massive, ugly face stood out naked, the broken nose all askew.

"Aye." The sculptor smiled grimly. "I shaved for the evening, my friend. Give my name to none. I've a mask that will conceal most of this nose that Torrigiano smashed so long ago. And beneath this robe, my needle of a sword."

Agrippa met the brooding flash of those eyes, and frowned.

"You don't expect trouble?"

"Yes." Michelangelo took his arm. "You know, my friend, how presentiment comes to me. You know how I fled Florence because of it, when Piero de Medici fell, and how it led me to flee from Rome half an hour ahead of the police whom Pope Julius sent to kill me. Well, to-night I have this same dark feeling. Why, I cannot say."

Agrippa hugged him. "Too much hard work! What you need is a cup of good wine to banish your gloom, and a laughing girl, and a ring of music in the alcove. Come on! Leave off the mask until we get there, eh? A friar can go safe about the streets, at least. I have ordered horses to be brought two hours

past midnight, for me and the Donna Ysabel."

"Two hours past midnight, eh? And how to leave the city gates?"

"Here's a pass—look at it! From the Pope himself. To pass two of us."

Michelangelo nodded, drew the brown cowl over his head, and they set forth.

Rome by night, in this year of grace, was not lightly braved. Feud and intrigue flourished; assassins, bravos, banditti lurked in darkness. The Medici were in power now, but other families craved the sweets—just as other painters and sculptors were not averse to having a dagger remove the obstreperous Buonarrotti. Indeed, he had full as many personal enemies as any cardinal in the list.

THE two men were glad of cloak and cowl, for the night was bitter chill.

"Not that cowl or mask will keep you unknown when we get there," said Agrippa gayly. "You're expected with me, and you're probably the most famous person in Rome, or at least the best-known."

To this Michelangelo merely shrugged.

The gates of the little villa opened to the face of Agrippa, whom the servants of Don Rodrigo knew well. The house itself opened to them, disclosing a blaze of lights, a glitter of brave costumes, a thrumming lilt of music. Domino in place, masks donned, they entered, and were immediately separated.

The Franciscan made his way through the gay throng to a blazing log fire, and stood warming himself, grimly eyeing the gay, drinking, dancing couples. Italian, Spanish, French was being spoken all around. Buonarrotti sneered to himself.

"Lackeys from the palaces of cardinals! And there's the wench herself."

Grudgingly, he admitted her beauty, draped—more or less—as the chaste Diana, a crescent moon of brilliants glittering against the golden masses of her hair. As he eyed her, a Moorish cavalier came up and tapped him on the arm.

"Ha, good friar! A toast with you. This way, you!"

A servant with his tray and tall silver goblets came to them and poured wine. The Moor lifted his cup, and Michelangelo knew he was dealing with Don Rodrigo: the Castilian lisp betrayed the Spaniard.

"A health to the Florentine Buonarrotti! I hear they've chosen him instead of Da Vinci to do the church of San Lorenzo. *Viva!*"

"Bah!" Michelangelo put down his goblet. "So you pierced my disguise, did you?"

Don Rodrigo laughed heartily. "Are there two men of such thews, such barrel-chests, in all Rome? The shaven chin, I confess, worried me. It has fooled my sister. Go and salute her, I pray you; she has pestered me to learn who this Franciscan might be."

Buonarrotti emptied his flagon, then made his way to the fair Diana. He carried her off from the crowd of gallants about her by main strength, then spoke abruptly.

"Where can we be alone? I have a message for your ear."

"Come," she murmured, her slim hand on his arm. "But if I grant you the favor, then you must lift your mask!"

"Agreed," said the Florentine, and added a rude, bold jest that brought a chime of laughter from her lips. It was not an age of restrained speech.

A door closed behind them. They were alone in a long, empty room with some broken furniture piled at the far end. Donna Ysabel faced around.

"Well? Off with your mask!"

"First, my message," said Michelangelo. "Perhaps, dear lady, you remember an old friend of mine in Toledo? By name, Don Felipe de Bazan."

FOR an instant, the woman before him seemed absolutely frozen by that name. Her blue eyes glittered through her mask. With a little gasp, she put a hand to her bosom.

Then, swift as light, her hand came forth. Steel glittered. With the light, lithe grace of a springing tigress, she plunged the poniard home, her whole weight behind it—straight at the heart of the Florentine.

He staggered back against the wall, arms outflung for support. She dropped the haft of the dagger; the thin steel blade had broken off. She swooped a hand at his mask, tore it away; and a cry broke from her.

"You! You—without a beard—"

Then she was gone, and the heavy door slammed behind her, closing off her quick, cruel laughter. She thought him finished by that blow.

As did not Messer Buonarrotti.

"By the good right hand of my father Ludovico, that was a close one!" he muttered, coming erect and grasping at his brown habit. Loosened, the broken blade of the poniard fell away and tinkled on

the stones. "A shrewd blow. And if the good mail-shirt saved my life, at least I'll have sore ribs for many a day!"

He stooped for his mask, and found the strings broken. A candle was burning in a wall-sconce at one side. He started toward it, with intent to repair the strings, when the door burst open. Two men came in, halted, stared at him.

"The devil! He's not dead, not even hurt! Look here, Rodrigo—"

The Moor followed them hastily, then slammed the door with an oath.

"Take him, you fools! You have weapons—"

Buonarotti nimbly stepped backward. Not in fright, but to gain space to be rid of the monk's robe. He was out of it as they came forward—out of it, to reveal a dark shirt, and the sword leaping from its scabbard.

"One miss—three make good! Is that it?" he roared angrily.

THE two first men were already coming at him. Strangers as they were, he could guess they were bravos, hired like Don Rodrigo himself for this job. Donna Ysabel was playing Agrippa for her own sweet sake; but through Agrippa, they had brought Buonarotti into the net of murder. And he had thought himself helping his friend!

A wild, harsh laugh burst from him. The two men paused, spread out, while Don Rodrigo crept along the wall to take him from behind.

"Look at the sword!" cried one of the two, with a strong French accent. "A poker, a *rapière*! And see how he holds it—ha!"

The other bravo laughed. "Well named! At him, then!"

They dove forward. Buonarotti, the long dagger whipping out in his left hand, waited not for the attack, but flung himself at them, dagger to one blade, rapier to the other. Nick and slash, a cut that came in under his arm, the needle-blade coiling around the other and sliding past it—and the Frenchman was coughing with a hole in his throat as he collapsed. Don Rodrigo cried out in sharp warning:

"Mail! Chain-mail beneath his shirt!"

"For you, Spanish fencing-master!" roared Michelangelo, and whirled upon him with furious attack. A feint, however; he had the two of them before him next moment, and neither of them could reach his rear. Steel clashed. Down dropped the sculptor, almost to the floor; but as he dropped, his body seemed to

uncoil. The long needle of steel whipped home. The second bravo, whimpering, staggered, came to one knee, and sagged down with blood spurting from his side.

"Earn your money, Spaniard, earn your money!" taunted Michelangelo. "No chance in the back now. Face to face, sword and needle— The devil!"

He had slipped in the blood of the first man. He lost balance, staggered. Don Rodrigo's steel licked in, slashed his arm; he went sprawling headlong. But as he fell, he caught the Spaniard's ankle; and with a crash, Don Rodrigo followed him to the floor.

Steel tinkled on the stones. Buonarotti came to his feet; and in those mighty arms of the sculptor writhed the other man, desperate but helpless. With a roar, the sculptor flung him out bodily, headfirst, sending him crashing into the wall, to fall and lie quiet, a dreadful pool of red seeping out around his head.

A grunt escaped Michelangelo. Breathing hard, he bound a kerchief about the slash in his upper arm, helped tie the knot with his teeth. He picked up his rapier and thrust at the empty air with it, a grin on his lips.

"Ha! Not so bad, this needle!" he exclaimed with an air of satisfaction. "What use the edge, after all? Save to cut the flesh after the point enters!"

He swung around suddenly, hearing a noise at the door. And as he swung, his foot struck the same pool of blood as before, the same slippery stone. This time he went down full length. He was momentarily helpless.

A terrible palpitating cry burst upon the room.

DONNA YSABEL had come in. Now the door slammed as she darted forward and hurled herself at the body of Don Rodrigo. Perhaps she thought Buonarotti dead also, like the others.

She caught up the head of the Spaniard in her arms, so that his blood stained all her breast and shoulders. She broke into a frightened abandon of grief and alarm, and then for an instant seemed to freeze, as she realized that he was dead. A gasp escaped her. She looked up and saw Michelangelo getting to his feet. She did not see that the door had opened again, that Agrippa stood there upon the threshold, horrified at the scene.

"You!" she cried out. "You have done this—you!"

"So it seems," Michelangelo shook his head at her. "That fine paramour of

yours, whom you passed off as your brother—all of you in the plot, eh?"

She said nothing, but let the body of Don Rodrigo fall. Then she was catching up his fallen sword, was flinging herself on Michelangelo like an avenging whirlwind. A flood of scurrilous epithets burst from her lips. Her face was contorted by rage and despair until all semblance of beauty was gone, and the bloodstains lent her a frightful aspect.

Michelangelo fell back before that mad, insensate rush. He tried to knock her blade aside; to his amazement, she proved as adept in fence as himself, cut in for his knees, forced him to leap wildly. The Spanish blade drove into him, bent almost double, and a wild cry of fury and dismay escaped her.

"Mail! So that was it!"

SUDDENLY the blade was torn from her hand. At the same instant Camillo Agrippa moved—leaped forward and caught hold of her.

"Stop! Stop!" he cried in a voice of anguish. "You know not what you do."

She writhed like a snake in his grasp, twisted about, struck him across the face, caught the dagger from his waist. He thrust aside her hand and tried to grapple her close. The point of the poniard raked his side. A furious burst of passionate, convulsive movement swept her whole body. Both of them went to the floor, all asprawl.

And there, somehow, it happened.

Agrippa caught her as she rose unsteadily, the dagger gone. She put a hand to her breast, where fresh blood was welling forth, and cursed him.

"Fool that you are! Gull! Silly brain, addled by any woman's flattery. Hands off, I tell you."

She thrust him clear, tottered a pace or two, and came down beside the body of Don Rodrigo, whose head she gathered again into her arms as she lay. Sobs racked her body, but gradually died away.

All this while, Michelangelo stood panting, holding that thin blade of his, eyes grimly fastened upon the scene. Agrippa turned to him and tore off his mask, showing a face pale as death, and starred with burning eyes.

"I can't believe it—she's not herself! Was it a plot?"

"You would not listen before. Why listen now?" said Michelangelo. Agrippa looked down at the woman, and shivered.

A little cry escaped him. She had sunk forward to rest, and her head had fallen on the breast of Don Rodrigo.

"I see. I heard what she said—then you know of this, Michel?"

"I was warned," said the sculptor, and let the words carry their own weight. Agrippa met his brave, steady gaze, and made a little gesture of futility.

"Then she was not his sister."

"His paramour," came the two harsh words. For a moment the younger man's features were convulsed with emotion. Then his head came up.

"I understand, my friend. And now—what?"

"The devil! This is not a thing to be talked about." The sculptor sheathed his blade. "You've horses waiting, and a pass for the gates—eh? Good. I must ride to Carrera and see about the marble blocks for San Lorenzo. Ready?"

His arm went about the shoulders of the younger man in a swift, warm embrace. Then Agrippa turned and went to the woman. He leaned over her, touched her lifeless cheek with his finger—then straightened up.

"Let us go now," he said quietly.

They departed together. The episode was closed. The needle of steel had been christened, and had proved itself, in the hand of Michelangelo.

AND at Carrera," concluded Martin Burnside, sucking at his pipe, "he let his beard grow again. And in the end, Agrippa was the man to lift that Obelisk into place, and to write a book on fencing that was illustrated with the designs of his friend. His work antedated that of the Spaniard, Carranza, by fifty years. Carranza simply borrowed his methods and got the credit for them. And the rapier changed the course of history thereafter, by its influence."

"Where'd you get all this yarn?" I demanded. Martin Burnside chuckled, and waved his pipe at me, airily.

"Well, Michelangelo was certainly not sufficiently proud of it to include it in his memoirs; and if I've rescued it from oblivion—look here! Are you, by any chance, jealous of me? Do you think you're the only man alive can tell a story, eh?"

"Don't be a fool. I only want to know whether it has any basis of fact."

Martin Burnside nodded sagely and tapped the brown leather book.

"Look it up for yourself," he said.

Another of these vivid pictures from the past will appear in our next issue.

TARZAN and the

The great climax in this latest exploit of the most famous of fiction adventurers.

By EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS

The Story Thus Far:

IN the heart of the African jungle there came a group to Tarzan of his native friends the Waziri, begging help: their young girls were mysteriously disappearing; it was suspected that they were being carried away by the Kavuru, a strange savage jungle race, said to be white. Buira, daughter of Muviro the chief, had been the latest victim. Muviro and ten of his warriors started to her rescue, while Tarzan took up an independent trail.

On the way he met with perils and with adventures: among the latter, he saved from a lion a Kavuru named Ydeni. Though grateful, Ydeni refused to lead Tarzan to the Kavuru stronghold, hinting that it would mean the ape-man's death.

In London, at about the time Tarzan set forth there had come to Jane, Lady Greystoke—Tarzan's beautiful young wife—a wealthy woman friend married to a titled foreigner much younger than herself, Prince Sborov. The new Princess Sborov brought a curious story: their pilot Neal Brown had told them of a weird white race in the African Hinterland who possessed the secret of eternal youth. The aging Princess wished to discover this secret, and Lady Greystoke decided to accompany them—the Prince and Princess, Tibbs the valet, Annette the maid, and the pilot Brown. Buffeted by storm over a trackless African forest, their plane ran out of gas; luckily, they landed unharmed.

However, their situation was alarming. It was discovered that there was no ammunition; so with a hand-ax and Brown's clasp-knife, Jane shaped a bow and arrows and a spear from branches; they were forced to eat what game she could fell with these dubious weapons.

The second evening a quarrel arose between the selfish and arrogant Alexis and his wealthy wife, and when morning came, the horrifying discovery was made that she had been killed during the night

—her skull split open. Suspicion rested openly upon Alexis. After burying the Princess, the party—taking only the barest essentials—started through the jungle. Jane left a note telling of their plight, which she pinned to the boma wall.

As the castaways plodded on, ill-feeling toward Alexis ran high, though Jane tried to maintain an impartial attitude.

Brown and Annette had become greatly attracted to each other; and that night, when Annette disappeared, Brown accused Sborov of killing her, though Jane pointed out that the girl had been seized and carried off by some unknown force. Sborov, maddened by a guilty conscience and tortured by unaccustomed hardship and deprivation, attempted to kill Brown and failing, fled into the forest. The party, now reduced to three, went on without him. That afternoon, as they trudged along in single file, Jane felt an irresistible impulse to turn back—to leave Tibbs and Brown. In vain she fought this impulse; it became too strong for her will, and not until she found herself being carried deep into the forest by a painted white savage, did she realize that she had been hypnotized. Escape was impossible; the next day he brought her to a strange village peopled only by men. Savage leopards guarded the courtyard of the temple, while maniacs under guard performed the manual labor. In this village Jane found Annette, as yet unharmed. Jane's captor, Ogdi, exhibited evidences of an infatuation for her, and Jane determined to exploit his interest.

Meanwhile, shortly after Tarzan had met Muviro and his warriors at an appointed rendezvous, a Waziri runner arrived with a message Jane had sent her husband before the airplane take-off. While Tarzan considered the message, his pet monkey Nkima displayed a bit of paper he had found, during his rambles, pinned to the wall of a flimsy hut.

Tarzan, perusing this bit of paper, found to his deep concern that it told of

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Immortal Men

Illustrated by
Frank Hoban



The first lion bounded off into the jungle, his companions close upon his heels.

mishap to the Sborov plane. Alarmed for Jane's safety, Tarzan ordered the Waziri to rejoin him at the village of the Kavuru—and himself started with Nkima to trace the ill-fated party. From the hut where the note had been found, he was swinging eastward, when he came upon Sborov, menaced by a lion. Rescuing the terrified man, Tarzan obtained from him a garbled account of the hapless survivors of Sborov's party. The ape-man, taking Sborov on his shoulder, overtook Brown and Tibbs, and assumed command—though Sborov, in deadly fear of Brown, fled again into the forest.

At the Kavuru village Muviro and his warriors had been drawn into a fight in an attempt to save two aviators landing near by, out of gas. Only Muviro and one of his men escaped alive; they hid until Tarzan should arrive. Inside the village palisade Jane and Annette had been summoned to the presence of the Kavuru chief Kavandavanda, worshiped almost as a god by his followers. What was he like? She was soon to know. (*The story continues in detail:*)

AN idiot gibbered beneath the gloomy shadows of the forbidding forest. A little monkey swung low from a branch; and the idiot leaped for it, shrieking.

From high among the foliage of a tree near by, two appraising eyes watched the idiot. What passed in the brain behind those eyes, only the creature knew.

The idiot suddenly started to run blindly along a trail. He stumbled and fell. It was evident that he was very weak. He scrambled to his feet and staggered on. Through the branches above, the creature followed, watching, always watching.

The trail debouched upon a little clearing, perhaps an acre in extent. A single tree grew alone near the far side. Beneath the tree sprawled three maned lions; young lions, they were, in the prime of their strength.

As the idiot stumbled into the clearing, one of the lions arose and stared at the intruder, more in curiosity than in disapproval. The idiot saw the lions; and with loud screams, hideous screams, he bore down upon them, waving his arms wildly about his head.

Now, lions are nervous and temperamental creatures. It is difficult to prophesy just what they will do under any given circumstances.

The others had come to their feet with the first scream of the idiot, and now all three stood watching his approach. For just a moment they stood their ground



A little monkey swung low from a branch; the idiot leaped for it, shrieking.

before such an emergency as had never confronted any of them before. Then the one who had first risen turned and bounded off into the jungle, his two companions close upon his heels.

The idiot sat down suddenly and commenced to cry. "They all run away from me," he muttered. "They know I am a murderer, and they are afraid of me—*afraid of me! afraid of me! AFRAID OF ME!*" His shrieking voice rose to a final piercing crescendo.

The stalker among the trees dropped to the floor of the clearing and approached the idiot from behind. He was Ydeni, the Kavuru. Stealthily he crept forward. In his hand was a coiled rope.

Ydeni leaped upon the idiot and bore him to the ground. The idiot screamed and struggled, but to no avail. The mighty muscles of the Kavuru held him, and deftly bound his wrists together behind his back.

Then Ydeni lifted the man and set him upon his feet. The idiot looked at his captor with wide eyes, from which terror quickly faded to be replaced by a vacuous grin.

"I have a friend," he mumbled. "At last I have a friend, and I shall not be alone. What is your name, friend? I am Prince Sborov. Do you understand? I am a prince."

Ydeni did not understand; and if he had, he would not have cared. He had been scouting for more girls, and he had found an idiot. He knew that Kavandavanda would be pleased; for while there were never too many girls, there were even fewer idiots; and Kavandavanda liked idiots.

Ydeni examined his captive. He discovered that he was weak and emaciated, and that he was unarmed. Satisfied that the man was harmless, the Kavuru released his wrists; then he fastened the rope securely about Sborov's neck and led him off into the jungle along a secret hidden path that was a short-cut to the village.

His mind broken by terror and privation, the European babbled incessantly as he staggered along behind his captor. Often he stumbled and fell; and always Ydeni had to lift him to his feet, for he was too weak to rise without assistance.

At last the Kavuru found food, and halted while Sborov ate; and when they started on again, Ydeni assisted him, carrying him much of the way until at last they came to the palisade-protected village of the Kavuru.

IN the meantime, Tarzan was leading Brown and Tibbs along the main trail, a longer route to the same village; for none of them knew where it was located, and at best could only harbor the hope that this trail led to it.

Sometimes Nkima rode upon Tarzan's shoulder; or again, he swung through the trees above the three men. He at least was care-free and happy; Tarzan was concerned over the fate of his mate;

Brown was worried about Annette; and Tibbs was always sad on general principles when he was away from London. Being hungry and footsore and weary, and terrified by the jungle and its savage life, in no way lessened the pall of gloom that enveloped him.

They were not a happy company, but none could tell from Tarzan's manner or expression, or any word that fell from his lips, the bitterness of the sorrow that he held within his breast. He did not know what fate was reserved for the girl captives of the Kavuru; but his knowledge of the more savage tribes of these remote fastnesses offered but faint hope that he might be in time to rescue her. To avenge her, was the best that he could anticipate. . . .

And while his thoughts dwelt upon her, recalling each least detail of their companionship, Jane was being led into a large central room in the temple of Kavandavanda—king, witch-doctor and god of the Kavuru.

It was a large, low room, its ceiling supported by columns consisting of the trunks of trees, the surfaces of which, stripped of bark and darkened by antiquity, bore a high polish. Toothless skulls hung in clusters from the capitals of the columns, white against the darkened surfaces of the ceiling and the columns, grinning, leering upon the scene below, watching the silly antics of mortal men through the wisdom of eternity out of sightless eyes.

The gloom of the remoter purlieus of the large chamber was only partially relieved by the sunlight shining through a single opening in the ceiling and flooding a figure seated upon a great throne on a dais carpeted with the skins of leopards.

As her eyes rested for the first time upon the enthroned man, Jane was plainly aware of a mental gasp of astonishment. The picture was striking, barbaric; and the man was beautiful!

If this were Kavandavanda, how utterly different was he from any of the various pictures of him her imagination had conceived; and it was Kavandavanda, she knew; it could be none other. Every indolent, contemptuous line of his pose bespoke the autocrat. Here indeed was a king—nay, something more, even, than a king. Jane could not rid herself of the thought that she was looking upon a god.

He sat alone upon the dais except for two leopards, one chained on either side of his great throne chair. Below him,

surrounding the dais, were Kavuru warriors; and close at hand were the soft fat slaves such as Jane had seen elsewhere in the temple. Upon the floor, on each side of the dais, a dozen girls reclined upon leopard skins. They were mostly black girls, but there were a number with the lighter skins and the features of Bedouins. One of the Bedouin girls and a couple of the blacks were reasonably comely of face and figure, but on the whole they did not appear to have been selected with an eye to pulchritude.

Ogdli led his two charges to within a few yards of the dais; then, as he knelt himself, he gruffly ordered them to kneel also. Annette did as she was bid; but Jane remained erect, her eyes fearlessly appraising the man upon the throne.

He was a young man, almost naked but for an elaborate loin-cloth and ornaments. Many rows of human teeth, suspended about his neck, covered his chest and fell as low as his loin-cloth. Armlets, bracelets, and anklets of metal, of wood and of ivory, completed his barbaric costume. But it was not these things that riveted the girl's attention, but rather the youth's face and form.

AT first Jane felt that she had never looked upon a more beautiful countenance. An oval face was surmounted by a wealth of golden hair; below a high, full forehead shone luminous dark eyes that glowed with the fires of keen intelligence. A perfect nose and a short upper lip completed the picture of divine beauty that was marred and warped and ruined by a weak, cruel mouth.

Until she noticed that mouth, hope had leaped high in Jane's breast that here she and Annette might find a benevolent protector rather than the cruel savage they had expected Kavandavanda to be. But the man's eyes were fixed upon her in a steady stare. He too was appraising; but what his reaction, his expression did not reveal.

"Kneel!" he commanded suddenly in imperious tones.

"Why should I kneel?" demanded Jane. "Why should I kneel to you?"

"I am Kavandavanda."

"That is no reason why an Englishwoman should kneel to you."

Two of the fat black slaves started toward her, looking questioningly at Kavandavanda.

"You refuse to kneel?" asked the youth.

"Most certainly."

The slaves were still advancing toward her, but they kept one eye on Kavandavanda. He waved them back. A strange expression twisted his lips; but whether it was from amusement or anger, Jane could not guess.

"It pleases me to discuss the matter," said the youth; then he commanded Ogdli and Annette to rise. "You brought in both of these prizes, Ogdli?" he asked.

"No," replied Ogdli. "Ydeni brought this one." He gestured toward Annette. "I brought the other."

"You did well. We have never had one like her—she contains the seeds of beauty as well as youth." Then he turned his eyes upon Jane once more. "Who are you?" he demanded. "And what were you doing in the country of the Kavuru?"

"I am Jane Clayton, Lady Greystoke. I was flying from London to Nairobi when our ship was forced down. My companions and I were trying to make our way to the coast, when this girl and myself were captured by your warriors. I ask that you release us and give us guides to the nearest friendly village."



"Kneel!" he commanded in imperious

A CROOKED smile twisted the lips of the chief. "So you came in one of those devil-birds!" he said. "Two others came yesterday. Their dead bodies lie beside their devil-bird outside the city gates. My people are afraid of the devil-bird; they will not go near it. Tell me, will it harm them?"

The girl thought quickly before she replied. Perhaps she might turn this superstitious fear to her advantage. "They had better keep away from it," she advised. "More devil-birds will come, and if they find that you have harmed me or my companion, they will destroy your village and your people. Send us away in safety, and I will tell them not to bother you."

"They will not know that you are here," replied the youth. "No one knows what happens in the village of the Kavuru or the temple of Kavandavanda."

"You will not set us free?"

"No. No stranger who enters the gates of the village ever passes out again—and you, least of all. I have had many girls brought to me, but none like you."

"You have plenty of girls here. What do you want of me?"

His eyes half closed as he regarded her. "I do not know," he said in a voice scarce raised above a whisper. "I thought that I knew, but now I am not sure." Suddenly he turned his eyes upon Ogdli,

"Take them to the room of the three snakes," he commanded, "and guard them there. They cannot escape; but see that they do not try. I don't want anything to happen to this one. Medek will show you the way." He nodded toward one of the fat blacks standing near the dais.

"What was all the talk about, madam?" asked Annette, as they were being led through the temple by the slave Medek.

Jane told her, briefly.

"The room of the three snakes!" repeated Annette. "Do you suppose there are snakes in the room?" She shuddered. "I am afraid of snakes."

"Look above the doors of the rooms we pass," suggested Jane. "I think you will find the answer to your question there. There is a doorway with a boar's head above it. We just passed one with two human skulls over the lintel; and there, on the other side of the corridor ahead, is one with three leopards' heads. It is evidently their way of designating rooms, just as we number them in our hotels. I imagine it has no other significance."

Medek led them up a flight of rude stairs and along a corridor on the second floor of the temple, and ushered them into a room above the doorway of which were mounted the heads of three snakes. Ogdli entered the room with them. It



tones. "I am Kavandavanda!" "Why should I kneel to you?" demanded Jane.

was a low-ceiled room with windows overlooking the courtyard that surrounded the temple.

Annette looked quickly around the apartment. "I don't see any snakes, madam," she said, with evident relief.

"Nor much of anything else, Annette. The Kavuru don't waste much thought on furniture."

"There are two benches, madame, but no table and not a bed."

"There's the bed over in the corner," said Jane.

"That's just a pile of filthy skins," objected the French girl.

"Nevertheless it's all the bed we'll get, Annette."

"What are you talking about?" demanded Ogdli. "Don't think that you can escape. You haven't a chance; so there's no sense in planning anything of the sort."

"We weren't," Jane assured him. "We can't escape unless you'll help us. I was so glad when Kavandavanda said that you were to guard us. You know, you are the only friend we have, Ogdli."

"Did you see how Kavandavanda looked at you?" the man demanded suddenly.

"Why, no—not particularly," replied Jane.

"Well, I did; and I've never seen him look that way at a captive before. Neither did I ever know him to permit

a person to stand before him without first kneeling. I believe that you have bewitched him too. Did you like him, woman?"

"Not as well as I like you, Ogdli," whispered Jane.

"He can't do it!" exclaimed the man. "He's got to obey the law the same as the rest of us."

"Do what?" demanded Jane.

"If he tries it, I'll—" A noise in the corridor silenced him, and just in time. The door was swung open by a slave, and as he stood aside, the figure of Kavandavanda was revealed behind him.

As he entered the room, Ogdli dropped to his knees. Annette followed his example, but Jane remained erect.

"So you won't kneel, eh?" demanded Kavandavanda. "Well, perhaps that is the reason I like you—one of the reasons. You two may arise. Get out into the corridor, all of you except this one who calls herself Jane. I wish to speak with her alone."

OGDLI looked Kavandavanda straight in the eyes. "Yes," he said; "yes, high priest of the priests of Kavuru, I go; but I shall be near."

Kavandavanda flushed momentarily in what seemed anger, but he said nothing as the others passed out into the corridor. When they had gone and the door had been closed, he turned to Jane.

"Sit down," he said, motioning toward one of the benches; and when she had, he came and sat beside her. For a long time he looked at her before he spoke, his eyes the eyes of a dreamer of dreams. "You are very beautiful," he said at last. "I have never seen a creature more beautiful. It seems a pity, then—a pity!"

"WHAT seems a pity?" demanded the girl.

"Never mind," he snapped brusquely. "I must have been thinking aloud." Again, for a space, he was silent, sunk in thought; and then: "What difference will it make? I may as well tell you. It is seldom that I have an opportunity to talk with anyone intelligent enough to understand; and you will understand—you will appreciate the great service you are to render—if I am strong. But when I look at you, when I look deep into those lovely eyes, I feel weak. No, no! I must not fail; I must not fail the world that is waiting for me."

"I do not understand what you are talking about," said the girl.

"No, not now; but you will. Look at me closely. How old do you think I am?"

"In your twenties, perhaps."

He leaned closer. "I do not know how old I am. I have lost all track. Perhaps a thousand years, perhaps a few hundred, perhaps much older. Do you believe in God?"

"Yes, most assuredly."

"Well, don't. There is no such thing—not yet, at least. That has been the trouble with the world. Men have imagined a god instead of seeking god among themselves. They have been led astray by false prophets and charlatans. They have had no leader. God should be a leader, and a leader should be a tangible entity—something men can see and feel and touch. He must be mortal and yet immortal. He may not die. He must be omniscient. All the forces of nature have been seeking throughout all the ages to produce such a god, that the world may be ruled justly and mercifully forever, a god who shall control the forces of nature as well as the minds and acts of men.

"Almost such am I, Kavandavanda, high priest of the priests of Kavuru. Already am I deathless; already am I omniscient; already, to some extent, can I direct the minds and acts of other men. It is the forces of nature that yet defy me. When I have conquered these, I shall indeed be a god."

"Yes," agreed Jane, bent upon humoring this madman; "you shall indeed be a god; but remember that mercy is one of the characteristics of godliness. Therefore be merciful, and set my companion and me free."

"And have the ignorant barbarians of the outer world swoop down upon us and rob mankind of its sole hope of salvation, by destroying me? No!"

"But what purpose can I serve? If you free us, I promise to lead no one here."

"You can serve the only purpose for which women are fit. Man may only attain godliness alone. Woman weakens and destroys him. Look at me! Look at my priests! You think we are all young men. We are not. A hundred rains have come and gone since the latest neophyte joined our holy order. And how have we attained this deathlessness? Through women. We are all celibates. Our vows of celibacy were sealed in the blood of women; in our own blood will we be punished if we break them. It would be death for a Kavuru priest to succumb to the wiles of a woman."

Jane shook her head. "I still do not understand," she cried.

"But you will. Long ago I learned the secret of deathless youth. It lies in an elixir brewed of many things—the pollen of certain plants, the roots of others, the spinal fluid of leopards, and principally, the blood of women—young women. Now do you understand?"

"Yes." The girl shuddered.

"Do not recoil from the thought; remember that you will thus become a part of a living god. You will live forever. You will be glorified."

"But I won't know anything about it; so what good will it do me?"

"I shall know. I shall know that you are a part of me. In that way I shall have you." He leaned closer to her. "But I should like to keep you as you are." His breath was hot upon her cheek. "And why not? Am I not almost a god? And may not a god do as he chooses? Who is there to say him nay?"

He drew her to him.

CHAPTER XXVIII

TO WHAT DOOM?

IT was almost dusk when Ydeni led his captive through the village of the Kavuru and to the temple of Kavandavanda. By another trail Tarzan was

approaching the clearing before the village. He paused and lifted his head.

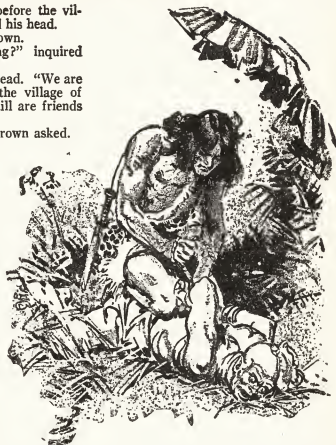
"What is it?" asked Brown.

"Is 'Is 'Ighness coming?" inquired Tibbs.

The ape-man shook his head. "We are nearing a village. It is the village of the Kavuru; but nearer still are friends—Waziri."

"How do you know?" Brown asked.

The man fought viciously to escape, but he was wax in the hands of the Lord of the Jungle. The ape-man could have killed him; but the instant he had realized that a Kavuru might fall into his hands, he had planned on taking him alive.



Tarzan ignored the question, but motioned for silence; then from his lips came softly the call of the African quail—voiced three times. For a moment, as he stood listening, there was silence; then once, twice, thrice came the answering call.

Tarzan moved forward again, followed by his companions; and a moment later Muviro and Balandó came running to drop to their knees before him.

Very briefly and in sorrow Muviro told what had happened. Tarzan listened without comment until Muviro finished.

"Then you think it impossible to gain entrance to the village?" he asked.

"We are too few, Bwana," replied Muviro sadly.

"But if Buira still lives, she is there," Tarzan reminded him, "and your Mem-sahib and another white girl who belongs to this man." He gestured toward the American. "Much that life holds for us three may be behind the gates of that village, and there is the memory of our slain friends. Would you turn back now, Muviro?"

"Muviro follows where Tarzan leads," replied the black simply.

"We will go to the edge of the clearing that you speak of, and there we may make our plans. Come."

The ape-man moved silently along the trail, followed by the others. As they came to the clearing, he halted.

Brown smothered an exclamation of surprise. "Well! In the name of—Say, do you see what I see? That's a ship."

"I forgot to tell you," said Muviro.

"Two men came in a ship and landed. The Kavuru killed them. You can see their bodies lying beside the ship."

AS Tarzan stood at the edge of the forest beyond the village of the Kavuru, it was well for his peace of mind that he did not know what was transpiring in the temple of Kavandavanda on the opposite side of the village; for at that very moment the high priest had caught Lady Jane in his arms.

Helpless and hopeless, not knowing which way to turn for help, the girl acted upon what appeared inspiration. Pushing the man's lips from hers, she raised her voice in a piercing cry: "Ogdli!"

Instantly the door of the apartment swung open. Kavandavanda released her

and sprang to his feet. Ogdli crossed the threshold and halted. The two men stood glaring at one another. Ogdli did not ask why the girl had summoned him. He appeared to know.

Kavandavanda's face and neck burned scarlet for a moment, then went deadly white as he strode past Ogdli and out of the room without a word.

The warrior crossed quickly to the girl. "He will kill us both now," he said. "We must escape; then you will belong to me."

"But your vows!" cried Jane.

"What are vows to a dead man?" asked Ogdli. "And I am as good as dead now. I shall go and take you with me. I know a secret passage beneath the courtyard and the village. Thus sometimes goes Kavandavanda to search in the forest for secret flowers and roots. When it is dark, we shall go."

AS Kavandavanda strode through the corridors of his palace, his heart black with rage, he met Ydeni coming with his captive.

"What have you there?" he demanded.

Ydeni dropped to his knees. "One of those into whose skull a demon has come to dwell. I have brought him to Kavandavanda."

"Take him away," growled the high priest, "and lock him up. I will see him in the morning."

Ydeni rose and led Sborov on through the temple. He took him to the second floor and shoved him into a dark room. It was the room of the two snakes. Next to it was the room of the three snakes. Then Ydeni shot a bolt on the outside of the door and went away, and left his prisoner without food or water.

In the next room Ogdli was planning the escape. He knew he could not carry it out until after the temple slept. "I will go away now and hide," he said, "so that Kavandavanda cannot find me before it is time to go. Later I shall return and get you."

"You must take Annette too," said Jane, "—the other girl. Where is she?"

"In the next room. I put her there when Kavandavanda sent us out of this one."

"You will take her with us?"

"Perhaps," he replied; but Jane guessed that he had no intention of doing so.

She very much wished to have Annette along, not alone to give her a chance to escape the clutches of the high priest, but because she felt that two of

them together would have a better chance of thwarting the designs of Ogdli once they were in the jungle.

"Do not try to escape while I am gone," cautioned Ogdli. "There is only one way besides the secret passage, and that is across the courtyard. To enter the courtyard, would mean certain death." He opened the door and stepped out into the corridor. Jane watched him close the door, and then she heard a bolt moved into place.

IN the room of the two snakes Sborov groped about in the darkness. A lesser darkness came from the night outside through the single window overlooking the courtyard. He went to the window and looked out. Then he heard what seemed to be muffled voices coming from an adjoining chamber. He prowled along the wall until he found a door. He tried it, but it was locked. He continued to fumble with the latch.

In the next room Jane heard him approaching the door after Ogdli left her. The warrior had said that Annette was in the next room; that must be Annette, she thought, trying to return to her.

Jane found that the door was secured by a heavy bolt on her side. She was about to call to Annette, when she realized that the girl evidently realized some necessity for silence, else she herself would have called to Jane.

Very cautiously she slipped the bolt a fraction of an inch at a time. Annette was still fumbling with the latch on the opposite side—Jane could hear her.

At last the bolt drew clear, and the door swung slowly open. "Annette!" whispered Jane as a figure, dimly visible in the gloom, came slowly into the room.

"Annette is dead," said a man's voice. "Brown killed her. He killed Jane too. Who are you?"

"Alexis!" cried Jane.

"Who are you?" demanded Sborov.

"I am Jane—Lady Greystoke. Don't you recognize my voice?"

"Yes, but you are dead. Is Kitty with you? My God!" he cried. "You have brought her back to haunt me! Take her away! Take her away!" His voice rose to a shrill scream.

FROM the door on the opposite side of the apartment came the sound of running, and then Annette's voice: "Madam! Madam! What is it? What has happened?"

"Who's that?" demanded Sborov. "I

know—it's Annette. You have all come back to haunt me."

"Calm yourself, Alexis," said Jane soothingly. "Kitty is not here, and Annette and I are both alive." As she spoke, she crossed the room to the door of the chamber in which the French girl was confined; and feeling for the bolt, drew it.

"Don't let her in!" screamed Sborov. "Don't let her in. I'll tear you to pieces if you do, ghost or no ghost." He started across the room on a run, just as the door swung open and Annette rushed in. At the same moment the door leading into the corridor was pushed open; and the black slave Medek entered.

"What's going on here?" he demanded. "Who let that man in here?"

At sight of Annette, Sborov recoiled, screaming. Then he saw Medek in the dim light of the interior. "Kitty!" he shrieked. "I won't go with you. Go away!"

Medek started toward him. Sborov turned and fled toward the far end of the room, toward the window looking out upon the courtyard. He paused a moment at the sill and turned wild eyes back toward the shadowy figure pursuing him; then with a final maniacal scream of terror, he leaped out into the night.

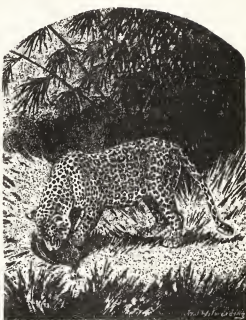
Medek followed him to the window and leaned out; then from his lips broke the same horrid scream that Jane had heard earlier in the day as she was being led from the throne-room of Kavandavanda. From below came the moans of Sborov, who must have been badly injured by the fall from the second-story window; but presently these moans were drowned by the snarls and growls of leopards.

The two girls could hear them converging from all parts of the grounds upon the hapless creature lying out there in the night. Presently the sounds of the leopards rose to a hideous din as they fought over the flesh of their prey. For a few moments the screams of their victim mingled with the savage mouthings of the beasts, but soon they ceased.

Medek turned away from the window. "It is not well to seek escape in that direction," he said, as he returned to the outer corridor, closing the door behind him.

"How awful, madam!" cried Annette.

"Yes," replied Jane; "but his sufferings were mercifully brief. Perhaps, after all, it is just as well. His mind



is gone. Prince Sborov had become a maniac."

"What a terrible price he paid! But is it not, perhaps, that he deserved it, madam?"

"Who shall say? But we too are paying a terrible price for his greed and his wife's vanity. The thing she sought is here, Annette."

"What thing, madam? Not the restorer of youth?"

"Yes. Kavandavanda holds the secret, but neither the Princess nor any other could have got it from him. We should all have met a terrible fate just the same, had the entire party succeeded in reaching the village of the Kavuru—the fate that is reserved for you and me."

"WHAT fate, madam?" Annette implored. "You frighten me."

"I do not mean to; but you may as well know the truth. If we do not succeed in escaping, we shall be butchered to furnish ingredients for Kavandavanda's devilish potion that keeps the priests of Kavuru always youthful."

"S-s-sh, madam!" cautioned Annette fearfully. "What was that?"

"I don't know. It sounded as though some one in the corridor had tried to scream."

"Then there was a thud, as though some one had fallen. Did you hear that?"

"Yes—and now some one is trying the door. They are slipping the bolt."

"Oh, madam! Some new horror!"

The door swung open, and a figure stepped into the room. A voice spoke. "Woman! Are you there?" It was the voice of Ogdli.

"I am here," said Jane.

"Then come quickly. There is no time to be lost."

"But how about the slave in the corridor? He will see us go out."

"The slave is there, but he will not see us. Come!"

"Come, Annette! It is our only chance."

"The other woman is here?" demanded Ogdli.

"Yes," replied Jane. "And if I go, she must go."

"Very well," snapped the Kavuru, "but hurry."

The two girls followed the man into the corridor. Across the doorway lay the body of Medek. The dead eyes were staring up at them. Ogdli kicked the black face and gave a short laugh. "He looks, but he does not see."

The girls shuddered and pressed on behind the warrior. He led them cautiously along dark corridors. At the slightest sound he dragged them into pitch-black rooms along the way until he was sure there was no danger of discovery. Thus much time was consumed in nerve-racking suspense.

Ogdli advanced with evident trepidation. It was apparent that now that he had embarked upon this venture he was terrified—the shadow of Kavandavanda's wrath lay heavy upon him. The night dragged on, spent mostly in hiding, as the trio made their slow way toward the secret entrance to the tunnel.

ONCE more they crept on after a period of tense waiting and listening in a dark chamber; then Ogdli spoke in a relieved whisper. "Here we are," he said. "Through this doorway. The entrance to the tunnel is in this room. Make no noise."

He pushed the door open cautiously and entered the chamber, the two girls following closely behind him. Instantly hands reached out of the dark and seized them. Jane heard a scuffling and the sound of running feet; then she was dragged out into the corridor. A light was brought from another apartment—a bit of reed burning in a shallow vessel of tallow.

Annette was there, close to her, trembling. They were surrounded by five

sturdy warriors. In the light of the sputtering cresset, the men looked quickly from one to another.

"Where is Ogdli?" demanded a warrior. Then Jane realized that her would-be abductor had vanished.

"I thought you had him," replied another. "I seized one of the girls."

"I thought I had him," spoke up a third.

"And so did I," said a fourth; "but it was you I had. He must have run for the tunnel. Come, we'll go after him."

"No," objected the first warrior. "It is too late. He has a good start. We could not catch him before he reached the forest."

"We could not find him there at night," agreed another. "It will soon be daylight; then we can go after him."

"We'll see what Kavandavanda says when we take the women to him," said the first warrior. "Bring them along."

AGAIN the girls were led through the corridors of the temple, this time to an apartment adjoining the throne-room. Two warriors stood before the door. When they saw the girls and were told what had happened, one of them knocked on the door. Presently it was opened by a black slave, sleepily rubbing his eyes.

"Who disturbs Kavandavanda at this hour of the night?" he demanded.

"Tell him we have come with the two white girls. He will understand."

The black turned back into the apartment. In a few moments he returned.

"Bring your prisoners in," he said; "Kavandavanda will see you."

They were led through a small ante-chamber lighted by a crude cresset, to a larger apartment similarly illuminated. Here Kavandavanda received them, lying on a bed covered with leopard skins.

His large eyes fixed themselves upon Jane. "So you thought you could escape?" he asked, a crooked smile twisting his weak lips. "You were going to run off with Ogdli and be his mate, were you? Where is Ogdli?" he demanded suddenly, as he realized that the man was not with the others.

"He escaped—through the tunnel," reported a warrior.

"He must have thought Kavandavanda a fool," sneered the high priest. "I knew what was in his mind. There are only six men beside myself who know about the tunnel. Ogdli was one of them; the other five are here." He was

addressing Jane. "I sent these five to wait at the entrance to the tunnel until Ogdli came, for I knew he would come." He paused and gazed long at Jane; then he turned to the others. "Take this one back again to the room of the three snakes," he ordered, "and see that she does not escape again!"—he indicated Annette with a gesture. "This other one I will keep here to question further; there may have been others concerned in the plot. Go!"

Kavandavanda seized Jane roughly, and though she fought to extricate herself from his grasp, he dragged her back into his inner apartment. "I ought to kill you, you she-devil!" he growled. "But I'll keep you—and I'll tame you!"



Annette cast a despairing look at Jane as she was led from the room, but Lady Greystoke could give her no reassurance nor encouragement. Their position seemed utterly without hope now.

"So," said Kavandavanda when the others had left, "you were going to run off into the jungle with Ogdli and be his mate? He was going to break his vow because of you!"

The shadow of a sneer curled the girl's lip. "Perhaps Ogdli thought so!"

"But you were going with him," Kavandavanda insisted.

"As far as the jungle," replied Jane; "Then I should have found some means to escape him; or failing that, I should have killed him."

"Why?" demanded the high priest. "Have you too taken a vow?"

"Yes—a vow of fidelity."

He leaned toward her eagerly. "But you could break it—for love; or if not for love, for a price."

"Not for anything."

"I could break mine. I had thought that I never could, but since I have seen you—" He paused; and then, peremptorily: "If I, Kavandavanda, am willing to break mine, you can break yours. The price you will receive is one for which any woman might be willing to sell her soul—eternal youth, eternal beauty." Again he paused as though to

permit the magnitude of his offer to impress itself upon her.

But again she shook her head. "No, it is out of the question."

"You spurn Kavandavanda?" His cruel mouth imparted some of its cruelty to his eyes. "Remember that I have the power to destroy you, or to take you without giving anything in return; but I am generous. And do you know why?"

"I cannot imagine."

"Because I love you. I have never known love before. No living creature has ever affected me as do you. I will keep you here forever; I will make you high priestess; I will keep you young through the ages; I will keep you beautiful. You and I will live forever. We will reach out. With my power to rejuvenate mankind, we shall have the world at our feet. We shall be deities—I a god; you a goddess. Look!" He turned to a cabinet built into the wall of the apartment. It was grotesquely carved and painted—human figures, mostly women; grinning skulls; leopards, snakes, and weird symbolic designs composed the decorations. From his loin-cloth he took a great key, hand wrought, and unlocked the cabinet.

"Look," he said again. "Come here and look."

Jane crossed the room and stood beside him at the cabinet. Within it were a number of boxes and jars. One large box Kavandavanda took in his hands.

"You see this?" he asked. "Look inside." He raised the lid, revealing a quantity of black pellets about the size of peas. "Do you know what these are?" he demanded.

"I have no idea."

"These will give eternal youth and beauty to a thousand people. You are free to use them if you say the word. One taken each time that the moon comes full will give you what all mankind has craved since man first trod this earth."

He seized her arm and tried to draw her to him.

With an exclamation of repugnance she sought to pull away, but he held her firmly; then she struck him heavily across the face. Surprised, he relaxed his grasp; and the girl tore herself away and ran from the room, into the antechamber, seeking to gain the corridor.

With a cry of rage, Kavandavanda pursued her; and just at the doorway leading into the corridor he overtook her. He seized her roughly, tangling his fingers in her hair; and though she fought to extricate herself, he dragged her back toward the inner apartment.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE DEAD MEN FLY

TARZAN and Brown had talked late into the night in an attempt to formulate a feasible plan whereby they might gain entrance to the village of the Kavuru. The ape-man had finally suggested a mad scheme.

Brown shrugged and grinned. "We could sure get in that way, of course, though it all depends. But how're we goin' to get out again?"

"Our problem now," replied Tarzan, "is to get in. We shall not have the problem of getting out until later. Perhaps we shall not come out. It really is not necessary that you come in with me if—"

"Skip it," interrupted Brown. "Annette's in there. That's enough for me to know. When do we start?"

"We can't do much until just before dawn. You need rest. Lie down. I'll wake you in time."

Tarzan slept too—a little way from the others on the edge of the clearing where he had a view of the village. He slept in a low crotch a few feet above the ground, and he slept well; yet he slept lightly, as was his wont. The ha-

bitual noises of the jungle did not disturb him, but as the time approached when he must awaken Brown, he himself came suddenly awake, conscious of something unusual.

Alert and watchful, he rose silently to his feet, listening. Every faculty, crystal sharp, was attuned to the faint note of discord that had aroused him.

Swiftly he moved through the trees, for now his sensitive nose had identified the author of the stealthy sound that his ears had detected—a Kavuru.

PRESENTLY the ape-man saw the dim figure of a man walking through the forest. He was walking rapidly, almost at a trot; and he was breathing heavily, as one who had been running. Tarzan paused above him for an instant, then dropped upon his shoulders, bearing him to the ground.

The man was powerful, and he fought viciously to escape, but he was wax in the hands of the Lord of the Jungle. The ape-man could have killed him; but the instant he had realized that a Kavuru might fall into his hands, he had planned upon taking him alive, feeling that he might turn him to some good account.

Presently he succeeded in binding the fellow's wrists behind him; then he stood him upon his feet. For the first time his captive looked him in the face. It was still dark, but not so dark that the Kavuru could not recognize the fact that his captor was not one of his own kind. He breathed a sigh of relief.

"Who are you?" he demanded. "Why did you capture me? You are not going to take me back to Kavandavanda? No, of course not—you are not a Kavuru."

Tarzan did not know why the man should object to being taken to Kavandavanda. He did not even know who Kavandavanda was, nor where; but he saw an opening, and he took advantage of it.

"If you answer my questions," he said, "I will not take you back to Kavandavanda, nor will I harm you. Who are you?"

"I am Ogdli."

"And you just came from the village?"

"Yes."

"You do not want to go back there?"

"No. Kavandavanda, who is high priest of the priests of Kavuru, would kill me."

By simple questions Tarzan learned from the answers Ogdli made, enough to give him the lead that he desired.

"What did Kavandavanda want of the two white girls that were taken to him?" he demanded.

"At first he would have killed them," replied Ogdli—willingly, for now he thought that he saw an opportunity to win mercy from this strange giant who was evidently interested in the two girls. "But," he continued, "he suddenly came to desire one of them for a mate. I tried to befriend them. I was leading them out of the village by a secret passage, when we were set upon by several warriors. They recaptured the girls, and I barely escaped with my life."

"So the girls are still alive?"

"Yes; they were a few minutes ago."

"Are they in any immediate danger?"

"No one can say what Kavandavanda will do. I think they are in no immediate danger, for I am sure that Kavandavanda will take one of them for a mate. Perhaps he already has."

"Where is this secret passage? Lead me to it. Wait until I get my friends."

He led Ogdli to where the others slept, and aroused them.

"I can show you where the passage is," explained Ogdli, "but you cannot enter the temple through it. The doors at either end open only in one direction, toward the forest, for those who do not know their secret; and only Kavandavanda knows that. One may easily pass out of the temple, but it is impossible to return."

FOR several minutes Tarzan questioned Ogdli; then he turned to Brown. "Annette and Lady Greystoke are in the temple," he explained. "The temple is in a small cañon behind the village. If we gained access to the village, we would still have a battle on our hands to reach the temple. This fellow has told me where I can expect to find the prisoners in the temple; he has also given me other valuable information that may be useful if we succeed in getting to Lady Greystoke and Annette. I believe that he has spoken the truth. He says, further, that one of the women is in grave danger at the moment—I think it is Lady Greystoke, from his description; so there is no time to be lost."

Then Tarzan turned to Muviro. "Hold this man until Brown and I return. If we do not return before dark, you may know that we have failed; then you should return to your own country. Do, then, what you will with this prisoner. Give Brown and me the weapons that

you took from the bodies of the flyers. They are of no more use to you, as you have exhausted the ammunition. Brown thinks we may find more in the ship. Come, Brown."

The two men moved silently out into the clearing, the ape-man in the lead. He bent his steps toward the ship, Brown treading close upon his heels. Neither spoke; their plans had been too well formulated to require speech.

WHEN they came to the ship, Brown at once crawled into the forward cockpit. He was there for several minutes; then he entered the rear cockpit. While he was thus engaged, Tarzan was busy over the bodies of the slain aviators.

When Brown had completed his examination of the interior of the cockpits, he descended to the ground and opened the baggage compartment; then he joined the ape-man.

"Plenty of ammunition," he said, and handed Tarzan a full box of cartridges. "That's about all you can manage—you aint got no pockets. I've stuffed my pockets full—must weigh a ton."

"How about petrol?" asked Tarzan.

"Not much more'n a hatful," replied the American.

"Will it do?"

"Yep, if it don't take too long to get warmed up. Got the 'chutes?"

Tarzan handed Brown a parachute that he had taken from the body of one of the flyers; the other he adjusted to his own body. Tarzan climbed into the forward cockpit, Brown into the other.

"Here's hoping," prayed Brown under his breath as he opened the valve of the air starter. The answering whir of the propeller brought a satisfied smile to his lips; then the ignition caught, and the engine roared.

They had waited for dawn, and dawn was breaking as Brown taxied across the rough plain for the take-off. He picked his way among boulders, choosing the best lane that he could find; but he saw that it was going to be a hazardous undertaking at best.

When he reached the limit of the best going, he brought the nose of the ship around into the wind, set the brakes, and opened the throttle wide for a moment. The motor was hitting beautifully.

"Sweet," muttered the American; then he throttled down to idling speed and shouted ahead to Tarzan: "If you know any prayers, buddy, you'd better say 'em—all of 'em. We're off!"

Tarzan glanced back, his white teeth gleaming in one of his rare smiles. There was a rush of wind as Brown gave the ship full throttle. It was a perilous take-off, swerving to miss boulders as the ship picked up speed. The tail rose. The ship bumped over the rough ground, tipped drunkenly as one wheel struck a small rock. A low boulder loomed suddenly ahead. It would be impossible to swerve enough to miss it without cracking up. Brown pulled the stick back and held his breath. The ship rose a foot or two from the ground. Brown saw that it was not going to clear the boulder. He could see but a single hope, a slim one; but he seized it instantly. He pushed the stick forward, the wheels struck the ground with a jarring bump, the ship bounced into the air as the stick helped to pull it up just enough to clear the boulder.

It had flying speed by now, and continued to rise slowly. It had been a close call; and although the morning air was chill, Brown was wet with perspiration as he climbed in a wide spiral.

The village of the Kavuru lay below, snuggled against the foot of the high escarpment that backed it, but it was not the village in which the two men were interested—it was the box cañon behind it, where lay the temple of Kavandavanda of which Ogdli had told them.

Higher and higher rose the graceful plane, watched from the edge of the forest by Muviro, Balandó, Tibbs and Ogdli; and now, awakened by the drone of the motor, by Kavuru warriors congregated in the main street of the village.

"The dead men fly!" whispered a warrior in awed tones, for he thought that the ship was being flown by the two who had brought it down and who had fallen before the attack of the villagers.

THE thought, once voiced, took root in the minds of the Kavuru and terrified them. They saw the ship turn and fly toward the village, and their fear mounted.

"They come for vengeance," said one.

"If we go into our huts, they cannot see us," suggested another.

That was enough. Instantly the street was deserted, as the Kavuru hid from the vengeance of the dead.

Above the lofty escarpment and the towering cliffs Brown guided the ship. Below them lay the little valley and the temple of Kavandavanda, plainly visible in the light of the new day.

The pilot cut his motor and shouted to Tarzan. "Not a chance to land there," he said.

Tarzan nodded. "Get more elevation, and tell me when."

Brown opened the throttle and commenced to climb in a great circle. He watched the altimeter. Before they left the ground, he had known the direction of the wind and estimated its force. At two thousand feet he leveled off and circled the rim of the cañon to a point above the cliffs on the windward side.

He cut his motor for an instant and shouted to the ape-man: "Stand by!"

Tarzan slipped the catch of his safety belt. Brown brought the ship into position again. "Jump!" he shouted as he brought the ship sharply into a momentary stall.

Tarzan swung onto the lower wing and jumped. An instant later Brown followed him.

CHAPTER XXX

THE WAGES OF SIN

KAVANDAVANDA'S soft, youthful appearance belied his strength. Jane was no match for him, and though she fought every foot of the way, fought like a young tigress, he dragged her back into his inner apartment.

"I ought to kill you, you she-devil!" he growled, as he threw her roughly upon the couch. "But I won't. I'll keep you; I'll tame you—and I'll start now." He came toward her.

Just then a pounding sounded on the outer door of the antechamber; and a voice rose in terror, calling: "Kavandavanda! Save us! Save us!"

The high priest wheeled angrily. "Who dares disturb Kavandavanda?" he demanded. "Get you gone!"

But instead of going, those at the door flung it open and pressed into the antechamber to the very door of the inner room. There were both slaves and warriors in the party. Their very presence there would have told the high priest that something was amiss, even without the evidence of their frightened faces.

Now indeed was he impressed. "What brings you here?" he demanded.

"The dead men fly; they fly above the village and the temple. They have come seeking vengeance."

"You talk like fools and cowards," grumbled Kavandavanda. "Dead men do not fly."



Jane's eyes turned toward the doorway. "Tarzan!" she cried. "Tarzan of the Apes!"

"But they do fly," insisted a warrior. "The two that we killed yesterday are flying again this instant above the village and the temple. Come out, Kavandavanda, and cast a spell upon them, sending them away."

"I will go and look," said the high priest. "Ydeni, bring this girl along. If I leave her out of my sight, she will find some means to escape."

"She shall not escape me," said Ydeni; and, seizing Jane by the wrist, he dragged her after the high priest, the warriors and slaves into the courtyard of the temple.

The moment that they emerged from the building, Jane heard plainly the drone of a ship's motor far above them. Looking up, she saw a plane circling overhead.

With fascinated eyes the Kavuru were watching it, with fascinated, frightened eyes. Jane too was fascinated, for she thought that the ship was searching for a landing-place; and she prayed that the pilot might not attempt a landing here, for she knew that whoever was in the ship would meet instant death at the hands of the savage Kavuru.

Then she saw a figure leap from the plane. A gasp of terror rose from the Kavuru. The first figure was followed by a second.

"They come!" cried a warrior. "Save us, Kavandavanda, from the vengeance of the dead."

The billowing white parachutes opened above the falling figures, checking their speed.

"They have spread their wings," shrieked a slave. "Like the vulture, they will swoop down upon us."

Jane's eyes followed the ship. As the second man jumped, it nosed down, then leveled off by itself, shot across the little cañon, came around in a steep bank, and went into a tail-spin almost directly above them.

Brown had opened the throttle wide at the instant that he jumped; for he and Tarzan had planned this very thing, hoping that the ship would crash near enough to the temple to cause a diversion that would enable them to reach the ground before warriors could gather below to receive them on the tips of sharp spears. But they had not anticipated the reality, the fear that gripped the Kavuru.

As they floated gently toward earth, a light wind carried them in the direction of the temple. They saw the crowd gathered in the courtyard looking up at them. They saw the ship diving with wide-open throttle and at terrific speed.

They saw the crowd melt and vanish into the interior of the temple an instant before the plane crashed in the courtyard and burst into flame.

Tarzan touched the ground first, and had thrown off the parachute harness by the time Brown was down. A moment later the two men started for the temple at a run.

There was no one to block their way. Even the guards at the outer gate had fled in terror. As they entered the courtyard, a few frightened leopards raced past them. The plane was burning fiercely against the temple wall a hundred feet away.

Tarzan, followed closely by Brown, ran for the main entrance to the building. Even here there was none to dispute their right to enter the sacred precincts. At a distance they heard the sound of a babel of voices; and guided by his keen ears, the ape-man hastened along corridors in the direction of these sounds.

In the great throne-room of Kavandavanda all the warriors and slaves of the temple were gathered. The high priest, trembling on his throne, was a picture of terror. The girls of the temple, those poor creatures awaiting death to give eternal life and youth to the Kavuru, were crouched at one side of the dais.

A warrior pushed forward toward the throne. An angry scowl darkened his painted face, made doubly hideous by the ivory skewer that passed through the septum of his nose. He pointed a finger at Kavandavanda.

"Your sins are being visited upon us," he bellowed. "You would have broken your vow. We who prevented Ogdli from taking the white girl last night know this. She bewitched him. She bewitched you. It is she who has brought the dead men upon us. Destroy her. Destroy her now with your own hands, that we may be saved."

"Kill her! Kill her!" shrieked a hundred hoarse voices.

"Kill her! Kill her!" shrilled the fat, oily black slaves in their high falsetto.

A COUPLE of warriors seized Jane, dragged her to the dais, lifted her roughly and threw her upon it.

Still trembling, Kavandavanda seized her by the hair and dragged her to her knees. From his loin-cloth he drew a long, crude dagger. But as he raised it above the heart of the girl, a pistol roared from the doorway of the throne-room; and Kavandavanda, high priest of the

Kavuru, seized his chest, and with a piercing scream, collapsed beside the girl he would have killed.

JANE'S eyes turned toward the doorway. "Tarzan!" she cried. "Tarzan of the Apes!"

A hundred pairs of other eyes saw him too—saw him and Brown advancing fearlessly into the room. A warrior raised a spear against them; this time Brown's gun flamed, and the fellow dropped.

Then Tarzan spoke—spoke to them in their own tongue. "We have come for our women," he said. "Let them come away with us in peace, or many will die. You saw how we came. You know we are not as other men. Do not make us angry."

As he spoke, he continued to advance. The Kavuru, hesitating to attack, fearful of these strange creatures that flew down from the sky, that had been dead and were alive again, fell back.

Suddenly Brown saw Annette among the other girls beside the dais. He leaped forward, and the warriors fell aside and let him pass. Emotion choked his words as he took the girl in his arms.

The ape-man leaped to the side of his mate. "Come," he said. "We must get out of here before they have time to gather their wits." Then he turned to the girls huddled below. "Is Buira, the daughter of Muviro, here?" he asked.

A young black girl ran forward. "The Big Bwana!" she cried. "I am saved!"

"Come quickly," commanded the ape-man, "and bring any of the other girls with you who wish to escape."

There was not one who did not wish to leave. Tarzan and Brown herded them from the throne-room and toward the temple entrance; but they had not gone far, when they were met by rolling clouds of smoke and heard the crackling of flames ahead.

"The temple is afire!" cried Annette.

"I guess we're in for it," growled Brown. "It caught from the ship. Looks like we're trapped. Does anyone else know a way out?"

"Yes," said Jane. "There is a secret passage leading from the temple to the forest. I know where the entrance is. Come this way." She turned back, and they hastily retraced their steps toward the throne-room.

Soon they commenced to meet warriors and slaves. These slunk away into side corridors and apartments. Presently they reached the apartments of Kavandavan-

da. Here Jane was struck by a sudden thought.

She turned to Brown. "We all risked our lives," she said, "and two of us died in a mad search for the secret of eternal youth. It is in this room. Do you care to take the few seconds it will require to get it?"

"Do I?" exclaimed Brown. "And how! Lead me to it."

In the inner room of the high priest's apartments Jane pointed out the cabinet. "There is a box in there that contains what you wish; but the key is on the body of Kavandavanda," she explained.

"I got a key right here," said Brown; and drawing his pistol, he fired a shot into the lock that shattered it; then he opened the cabinet.

"There," said Jane, pointing out the box that contained the pellets.

Brown seized it, and they continued on in search of the tunnel's entrance. But presently Jane paused, hesitant. "I am afraid we have come too far," she said. "I thought I knew just where the tunnel was, but now I am all confused."

"We must find some way out of the temple without further delay," said Tarzan. "The fire is spreading rapidly, following close behind us."

SMOKE was rolling down upon them in stifling volume. They could hear the ominous roaring of the flames, the crash of falling timbers as portions of the roof fell in, the shouts and screams of the inmates of the temple.

A warrior, choking and half blinded, stumbled into view from the dense smoke that filled the corridor along which they had come. Before the man could gather his faculties, Tarzan seized him.

"Lead us out of here," he commanded. "That is the price of your life."

When the fellow was able to open his eyes he looked at his captor. "Tarzan of the Apes!" he exclaimed.

"Ydeni!" said the ape-man. "I did not recognize you at first."

"And you wish me to lead you out of the temple? You who have slain Kavandavanda, our high priest?"

"Yes," replied Tarzan.

"If I show you the way through the village you will all be killed. The warriors of Kavuru are recovering from their first fright. They will never let you pass. I could lead you that way and let you be killed; but once you saved my life. Now I shall give you yours. Follow me."

He led the party a short distance down a side corridor and turned into a gloomy apartment. Crossing it, he pushed open a door beyond which was the utter darkness of a tunnel.

"This tunnel leads out into the forest," he said. "Go your way, Tarzan of the Apes, nor return again to the village of the Kavuru."

THREE weeks later a party of six was gathered before a roaring fire in the living-room of Tarzan's bungalow far from the savage village of the Kavuru. The Lord of the Jungle was there, and his mate; Brown and Annette sat upon a lion's skin before the hearth, holding hands; Tibbs sat decorously on the edge of a chair in the background. He had not yet become accustomed to sitting on terms of equality with titled personages. Little Nkima, with far greater poise, perched upon the shoulder of a viscount.

"What are we goin' to do with this box of pills?" demanded Brown.

"Whatever you wish," said Jane. "You were willing to risk your life to get them. If I recall correctly, I think you said something to the effect that if you had them back in civilization they would make you 'lousy' with money. Keep them."

"No," replied the American. "We all risked our lives, and anyway you were the one that really got them. The more I think of it, the less I like my scheme. Most everybody lives too long anyway for the good of the world—most of 'em ought to have died young!"

"I'll tell you what we'll do. We'll divide them. There will be five of us that will live forever."

"And be beautiful always," added Annette.

"If you will pardon my saying so, miss," observed Tibbs with an apologetic cough, "I should rawther dislike thinking of pressing trousers for so many years; and as for being beautiful—my word! I'd never get a job. Who ever heard of a beautiful valet?"

"Well, we'll divide 'em, anyway," insisted Brown. "You don't have to take 'em, but be sure you don't sell none of 'em to no cab-driver princes. Here, I'll divide 'em into five equal parts."

"Aren't you forgetting Nkima?" asked Jane, smiling.

"That's right," said Brown. "We'll make it six parts. He's sure a lot more use in the world than most people."

The Houseboat of

By WILLIAM MAKIN

ISAAC HERON was at peace with the world. He had become a water gypsy. Lounging against the mast on his little sailing boat, he dozed listlessly, lulled by the *lap-lap-lap* of the blue waters of the Waveney, in East Anglia.

He was on the "Broads"—that low-lying region of Suffolk and Norfolk, marked by lakelike expansions of the rivers. A boat, a dirty brown sail, a fishing-rod and a bucket containing a mess of bait provided him with a paradise enough. His lithe brown body, clad only in an old shirt and a pair of shorts, was whipped by the wind. His jet-black hair was strewn over his mahogany-colored features.

But with a characteristic gesture, his hand swept the hair from his eyes as something strange, something incongruous, flopped into the wind-ruffled waters by his boat. Many queer things come floating down these rivers, jetsam from the villages near the banks. But this black thing floating in the river was unique: It was a top hat.

A jerk of a hand at the sail, and the boat pitched forward toward the floating object. Lazily curious, Isaac Heron stretched himself over the gunwale and grabbed the top hat as it floated past. Water dripped from it, but the hat was still sound.

He was giving this piece of salvage an amused gaze, when a *flap-flap* sounded a few yards away. He swiveled round. A hand was being drawn back into the interior of an old unpainted houseboat moored against the bank. And a pair of white spats were floating merrily downstream.

The dark, somber eyes of the gypsy narrowed. He turned from these other pieces of jetsam to regard the houseboat past which his sailing boat was now slipping. It gave no sign of life; it was dirty and derelict—seemed to have been abandoned entirely to water rats. Yet the gypsy had seen a hand carelessly flinging these trappings of city life into the river.

Was it some business man who, strangely affected by this spacious landscape of water, waving green weeds and wind-blown sky, had decided suddenly to fling aside all suggestion of a city existence? But if so, why journey to the Broads in a top hat and spats? An odd garb for anyone in that green and blue paradise!

The houseboat was behind him now. Isaac Heron turned to regard the top hat. A strange smile crossed his face. The hat was a good one—glossy and fairly new. It has not been flung into the river because it was no longer respectable. He turned it over to look inside. The mark of a famous Bond Street hatter was prominent. And also a name—the name of the owner, in ink.

Julius Lasser.

The gypsy gave a low whistle of surprise, then glanced quickly over his shoulder at the houseboat, now disappearing as his sailing boat rounded a bend. Then his eyes traveled to a map lying near the mast. He scanned it. He was within half a mile of a village.

Once more his hand jerked the sail. The wind caught it and sent his boat swerving toward the bank. Easily, he jumped ashore; the sail tumbled down, and the boat was tied to a little tree.

HOLDING the top hat in his hand, the gypsy began to walk toward the village. Ten minutes later the proprietor of the Brown Cow drew in his breath sharply as a most extraordinary figure stepped into the saloon-bar—a brown-skinned gypsy in an old shirt and a pair of shorts, wearing on his head a glossy top hat.

"Lawdy! I thought you were a cannibal chief!" exclaimed the proprietor.

Isaac Heron smiled.

"Have you a telephone?" he asked.

"I have," nodded the inkeeper, still appraising this strange figure. "But it costs money to telephone."

The gypsy tossed a screwed-up pound note onto the bar.

Vanished Men

Our gypsy detective risks his life to solve an extraordinary mystery.

"I want to telephone London," he said quietly.

The innkeeper was impressed.

"Yes sir. This way, sir."

He led the way into a little parlor, where an old-fashioned telephone was fastened against the wall. He stood aside, watching the gypsy who patiently turned the handle to ring the local exchange.

"I want Whitehall One, Two—One, Two," said Isaac Heron.

The innkeeper opened his eyes wide in astonishment. He had not listened in on the radio for nothing. . . .

In his little room at Scotland Yard, Detective Inspector Graves replaced the receiver with a thoughtful air. Then he scratched his head. Finally, with a reckless air, he picked up the departmental telephone.

"Give me the Special Branch," he commanded. "Detective Benson, please." Some irritating noises. Then: "Is that you, Benson? Graves speaking. Can you come over and see me for five minutes? Yes, something you've been sniffing after for nearly a year."

The bait was sufficient to bring a broad-shouldered, cheery-faced young man into the room a few minutes later. Detective Benson was of the new school. He looked like a football player and ought to have been wearing an old Etonian tie. But about that he was always discreet. He was, however, wearing a suit that had the stamp of Savile Row.

"Discovered your fake passport-office yet, Benson?" asked Graves, pushing over a packet of cigarettes.

Benson gave a rueful grin and almost fell into a chair.

"No such luck!" he replied. "I know it's becoming something of a joke. I've followed a dozen trails, but there it is. The scent gives out. The trails lead nowhere. I expect the Chief will have me on the carpet again soon."

"Still, you've done something," encouraged Graves. "You've stopped the revolutionaries, the anarchists and the



Illustrated by
Harv  Stein

usual danger-gangs of Europe getting into the country."

"That was easy enough," nodded Benson. "A tour of Dover, Folkestone, Harwich and Southampton—and every hole was stopped. What we haven't been able to do is to prevent the escape of criminals from this country and journeying about the Continent with the finest faked passports ever devised."

"Exactly," nodded Graves. "And now I've got a tip for you."

"A tip!" The young man was genuinely excited.

Graves smiled. "There may be nothing in it," he warned. "On the other hand, there may be a good deal. I've just had a telephone-call from the Norfolk Broads."

"Damned good place for sailing," said Benson.

"Yes, sailing for the Continent!" emphasized Graves. "You know that for two days our department has been trying to find the trail of the absconding financier Julius Lasser."

Benson nodded.



"Lawdy! I thought you were a cannibal!" exclaimed the proprietor of the Brown Cow.

"Cleared off with a quarter of a million, didn't he? Our department was asked to keep an eye on the airports."

"Lasser's top hat was found floating in the waters of the Broads today," said Graves. "No mistake about it. His name was inside."

"Not suicide?"

"No one commits suicide with a quarter of a million in his pocket. The top hat was pitched into the river from an old houseboat moored against the bank. A pair of spats followed."

"A good place to get rid of one's city harness," smiled Benson.

"A very necessary place," agreed Graves. "A top hat on the Broads is about as conspicuous as a convict's suit on Piccadilly. It seems that Lasser is using that houseboat to change his wardrobe—and incidentally, to take off for a sea trip. There's a powerful motorboat hidden alongside the houseboat."

"Umph! The plot thickens. I suppose Lasser owns that houseboat?"

"I don't think he owns it," murmured Graves. "But it strikes me as an extraordinary coincidence that two men whom we've caught trying to escape the country were arrested within twenty miles of this spot on the Broads."

Benson's cheeks glowed.

"And that Italian anti-Fascist who got out of England and created a schnozzle in Milan was last seen at Ipswich," he

added excitedly. "When he was arrested in Italy, he had one of those faked passports in his possession."

"Significant, eh?" said Graves.

"When are you going to the Broads?" asked Benson bluntly.

"In fifteen minutes, in a police-car."

"Room for an extra one?"

"Sure."

Benson took Graves' hand in his huge paw and nearly crushed it.

"Thanks," he grunted.

"Don't mention it," said Graves, wincing.

In less than fifteen minutes two police cars emerged from Scotland Yard, and quickly threaded their way through the London traffic.

They headed northeast.

WITH sweat-grimed face, sobbing breath and torn clothes, a man plunged across a darkened countryside toward the houseboat creaking in the oncoming tide. With a gasp of relief he stretched out a hand and swung himself aboard. For a full minute he lay there, face downward on the narrow deck, temporarily exhausted.

"Who the devil are you?"

The words were growled at the fugitive from behind the yellow gleam of a lantern.

"For heaven's sake, douse the light!" gasped the voice of the man lying on the deck.

"What's the game?" insisted the man behind the lantern, at the same time shading it with his coat.

"I want to get away, damned quick, out of this country," whispered the prone figure.

The man with the lantern gave a grim chuckle.

"I don't know what you're talking about. You'd better get off this boat, quick!"

The figure on the deck pushed a dirty brown hand toward the lantern, revealing a bunch of five-pound notes.

"That shows I mean business," he gulped, recovering his breath. "A fellow in stir told me about this boat. Just missed getting his own passage."

There was silence for a minute.

"Better come below," grunted the man with the lantern at last.

He led the way down a short flight of steps, into a little cabin where a carefully shaded lamp revealed two men playing cards at a table. The air was thick with tobacco smoke.

"Found this bloke on deck," explained the man with the lantern. "Looks as though he's been running for it."

Two hard, calculating faces stared at the bedraggled fugitive. They appraised him in silence. One man had an ugly scar across his cheek. The other, with cold blue eyes and an air of authority, addressed himself to the sweat-stained figure.

"A gypsy, eh?"

"Yes."

Isaac Heron realized that this was no ordinary gamble. A slip, and his life would be worth nothing.

"What have you been doing?"

The gypsy shrugged.

"Broke into a country-house, got my hands on some notes, and then some one heard me. A Gorgio came for me. I had to knock him down."

"Did you kill him?"

"I don't know. Didn't wait. Just grabbed what I could, and ran for it."

"Where was this?"

"Fifteen miles away."

The man with the cold blue eyes tightened his mouth.

"You damned fool!" he snarled. "What made you come here? There's probably a whole pack of police on your trail."

At the same time his hand slid significantly to his hip pocket.

The gypsy was desperate. He fell on his knees.

"I swear I gave them the slip," he pleaded. "And I'll pay you—pay you handsomely to get me clear. Here, take the cursed money."

With a gesture of disgust he flung the handful of notes on the table. A sneer crossed the white face of the other.

"So you did murder the Gorgio, eh?"

His fingers drummed a little tattoo on the table. Then at last his eyes sought the notes. A gleam of cupidity came into the cold blue eyes. "All right, we'll take a gamble on you. Damned lucky for you that a ship is sailing tonight. Holland. Introduce him to his fellow-passengers, Jake."

"Yes, Cap'n."

It was the man with the lantern who spoke.

"And remember," came the final snarl, "you do as you're told from now on. Orders will be given you." He smiled ironically as he forestalled the gypsy's attempt to take back a couple of the bank-notes lying on the table. "I'll take care of that little bundle of loot," he nodded, and rested his hand upon it.

"This way, gypsy," growled the man with the lantern.

With a sigh of despair, Isaac Heron turned and followed him.

They proceeded along a little companionway, down another staircase, and then into a roomy saloon on a level with the lapping water of the river.

A queer group of people were lounging about in listless and yet impatient attitudes. A haze of cigarette smoke swathed them.

"Your fellow-passengers for Holland," grunted the man with the lantern. "When we're ready, you'll be called."

"How much longer are we to wait?" asked a heavily built man sitting on a cushioned bench.

"The ship ought to be signaling us within the hour, Mr. Lasser," grunted the other. "In the meantime, here's some fresh company for you—a gypsy dago."

And with a casual nod, the man with the lantern departed.

"A gypsy! How thrilling!" shrilled a feminine voice. A woman tawdrily dressed raised herself and sauntered over to Isaac Heron. "I'm Amy Wilone. I dare say you've heard of me."

HERON nodded. Amy Wilone had the reputation of being the cleverest adventuress in Europe.

"Who hasn't heard of you!" he said, with a bow.

"My assistant," nodded Amy in the direction of the other woman. "We have a little business to transact on the Continent. It is unfortunate that one has to adopt this unconventional method of travel. What is your specialty, may I ask?"

"Burglary," said Isaac Heron bluntly.

"How crude!" grimaced Amy. "I feel sure I could use you to better advantage."

"Thank you."

"Care for a game of cards, gypsy?" asked one of the men.

"Don't be a fool," broke in the absconding financier Julius Lasser, to Isaac Heron. "That's Gentleman Joe, the card-sharper."

"It's no use," smiled Isaac Heron. "I haven't a cent left after paying my passage money."

"Yes, this is a profitable racket," mused the financier. "And a nice company for cruising! You see the Chinaman in the corner? A dope-peddler on the run. And the two men muttering to

each other? Balkan revolutionaries with murder in their heads. Myself, a gentleman who finds it inconvenient to stay in England at present."

He laughed, and pushed a box of cigarettes over to Isaac Heron.

At the same moment, the door of the saloon was opened, and the man known as Jake thrust his head inside, barking harshly:

"Gypsy!"

Isaac Heron turned.

"Come along and have your mug taken. We've got to get your passport ready."

ONCE again the gypsy proceeded along the maze of companionways in that strange houseboat. This time he was taken to a room which had been arranged as a photographers' studio. An arc-lamp and a camera was focused upon him. A nod from the photographer, and he was released. Two men were working at a desk, bent over a little stack of passports, and using paint brushes which they dipped into bowls of chemicals. It was a brief glimpse of the passport factory at work. But a few minutes later Isaac Heron was back in the saloon among that little group who were to voyage to Holland.

They were each awaiting the hour of departure with ill-concealed impatience. The card-sharper was continually snick-ing a pack of cards. The two Balkan revolutionaries had lapsed into silence. The Chinaman wore a fixed bland smile. The rest of the party smoked interminably.

"Here's your passport, gypsy!"

Ten minutes after the photograph had been taken, Jake brought the finished product. Heron glanced at it—an admirable piece of workmanship. He slipped it into his pocket, for Jake was already giving orders.

"We've got the signal. The motor launch is waiting. You all ready?"

With sighs of relief, they rose and passed out of the saloon onto the deck of the houseboat, then proceeded to the stern, where they lowered themselves one by one into a powerful motorboat. Heron observed that the captain and the man with the scar on his cheek were in command. They took their seats. A nod to Jake, and they were pushed away by a boathook into mid-stream.

The engine coughed into life. The exhaust clucked. They began to move swiftly along the river toward the sea some miles away. In a few minutes they

were breasting the incoming salt-water tide.

"Put that light out, you damned fool!"

It was the captain at the wheel who spoke.

"Sorry!" said Heron, a cigarette between his lips. He had flicked an automatic lighter.

There was silence for some time. They were at the mouth of the river, the open sea before them. Away in the darkness a light gleamed and swung. It was at the masthead of a steamer.

"There she is," whispered the man with the scar on his cheek.

The Captain did not reply. His head was bent sidewise intently in a listening attitude.

"D'you hear anything?" he asked his companion.

The man with the scar was at the engine. He shook his head.

"Nothing, Cap'n."

"Stop the engine a moment!"

The rhythmic throbbing died away. There was silence except for the *slap-slap* of waves against the hull.

"Another motor-launch!" gasped the man with the scar.

EVEN as he spoke, a beam of light cleft the darkness, and a searchlight from the following launch.

"A Coast Guard cutter!" snarled the captain. "Get every ounce out of that damned engine."

The engine roared into life again. At the same moment the pursuing motor-launch fired a shot from a revolver into the air—a signal to stop. But already the quarry was leaping away, spray being flung over the bows.

"Somebody must have given the police a tip!" yelled the man with the scar, above the rush of wind.

"It's that cursed gypsy," replied the captain. "You head for the ship. I'll deal with him."

He whipped out a revolver, and came toward Isaac Heron.

"Police spy, eh! That's what you are!" declared the captain, a grim smile on his face. His fingers curled dangerously around the trigger of the revolver and his eyes narrowed.

Isaac Heron shrugged. He realized that he had been playing a dangerous game, and that it was impossible to bluff further.

"All right," he nodded. "Go ahead and shoot!"

A faint scream came from the women.



"I'll pay you—pay you handsomely to get me clear," the gypsy pleaded.

They covered their faces with their hands as the revolver was leveled. But the grim smile on the captain's face was still there.

"No, I'm not going to be fool enough to shoot you," he said distinctly above the throbbing of the engine. "You're worth more to the police behind there than you are to us. We'll give them an opportunity to stop for you and pick you up out of the sea. Stand up! You're going to jump overboard."

SLOWLY, Isaac Heron raised himself. The motor-launch was pitching against oncoming waves. With feet planted firmly apart, the captain, gripping the revolver, watched him.

The gypsy gave a backward glance at

the pursuit. He realized that in that motor-launch was Detective Inspector Graves. Although they would not know who had tumbled into the sea, they would surely stop to pick up the dropped cargo. And in those few precious minutes the launch would have reached the waiting steamer, and the escape of the fugitives accomplished.

"Well, good luck to you!" sneered the captain. "I hope you're a good swimmer."

For a moment his gaze wavered toward the black sea streaked with foam that was swirling past them. It was the moment for which Isaac Heron had been waiting. His brown fist shot out and caught the captain on the jaw. At the same time he jumped for the revolver.

He seized it at the moment the captain slithered to the bottom of the boat. Without hesitation, Heron pointed the gun at the throbbing engine and fired, again and again. The bullets went crashing into the midst of the mechanism. The next instant, with the revolver in his hand, he jumped—and disappeared into the flurry of foam which the launch left in its wake.

Cursing and yelling orders, the captain scrambled to his feet.

"She's still going!" shouted the man with the scar, triumphantly.

But even as he spoke, there came a sob of death from the engine, and it stopped. The launch slid helplessly in the trough of a wave.

Numbed by the cold of the sea, Isaac Heron struck out desperately for the oncoming Coast Guard cutter. It came rushing out of the darkness, a monstrous thing. He gave a frantic shout, imagining that the pursuers had not seen his jump overboard.

But even as the launch slid toward him, a familiar anxious face was leaning over the gunwale, and a sailor was poised with a rope.

"It is Heron!" cried Detective Inspector Graves.

At the same time the rope whizzed toward the swimmer. Desperately the gypsy grabbed it, and in a moment he was being hauled, a bedraggled figure, into the Coast Guard cutter.

"Good work, Heron!" shouted Graves, as the cutter leaped forward again. "My friend Benson has raided the houseboat and got the whole gang there. And now we're going to pick up these escapers. They seem in difficulty with their motor-launch, thanks to you."

Isaac Heron leaned back, and helped himself liberally to a flask of brandy that was thrust into his hands.

"Sorry we've missed the steamer!" he gasped, nodding in the direction of a black hulk, which, sensing something wrong, was already slipping away in the darkness.

"There's a naval sloop waiting for her a few miles away," smiled Graves. "In the meantime, come and meet your friends again."

The beam of the searchlight silhouetted the little group of men and women in the bobbing, helpless launch. In dejected attitudes of surrender, they held their hands above their heads.

Another fine story by Mr. Makin is scheduled for our next issue.

A poignant drama of hard life in the Newfoundland backwoods.

By THEODORE
GOODRIDGE
ROBERTS

Illustrated by George Avison

Meat in

IT was well along in December, but the days were like fine early autumn weather, with bland fogs, mellow sunshine and gentle breezes from the southeast. The frost had not struck hard enough yet to freeze the bogs. Snipe and woodcock could still sink their soft-tipped bills in the mud after worms and grubs. Caribou were moving from northern and eastern coastwise barrens to more sheltered feeding-grounds, but were taking their time about it.

Barney Dever of Skiff Cove was not getting much enjoyment from the fine unseasonable weather. He was young enough and healthy enough; but he carried too much care in his heart for happiness. His material possessions were few: a little house, a leaky boat, an old sealing-gun—and a sick grandfather with a craving for tobacco and fresh meat. What with stark poverty and old Corney Dever's demands for 'baccy for his pipe and red meat for the pot, Barney felt like a sick whale with a thrasher shark pounding the back of his neck and a swordfish stabbing his belly. And the old man was not all of it. There was a girl down along in Squid Tickle, the next harbor to the northward, who played the mischief with his peace of mind. Now what excuse had he to be weaving fancies about a girl—a starvation-poor youth like him?

Barney Dever snared hares on the barrens and fed their tender flesh to his grandfather until the old man up and rebelled, swearing that a sniff alone of the



the Pot

steam of a rabbit stew was enough to turn his poor stomach. So one fine December morning, with the sun shining like early September and the snipe still sinking their rubber-tipped bills into the unfrozen bogs, Barney took the old gun and the empty powder-horn down from the wall and set out overland for Squid Tickle.

The nearest trader, Skipper Clynch by name, had his headquarters in Squid Tickle. All the noddies of the little harbors on that bit of coast traded with Skipper Clynch—not because they liked it, but because there was nothing else for them to do. He owned two fore-and-afters, and they owned nothing of the kind. He took their cured fish every season, and in return they took what they could get out of him of goods and victuals and gear. The skipper did the bookkeeping. It was a mystery.

Barney Dever of Skiff Cove began to drag his feet as he neared Squid Tickle. He did not relish the prospect of an interview with the great man. His last interview had been difficult enough. It had been all he could do to get a scanty winter's supply of the simplest victuals, and a few pounds of tea and tobacco, in return for his summer's take of fish; and the skipper had held a queer paper covered with ciphering under his nose, threateningly, which he called a statement of their account.

But Barney was in luck that morning. The trader's daughter was home for the Christmas vacation from the grand

school for young ladies which she attended in St. John's; and she was in the store itself when Barney entered; so what could the proud father do but show her that at heart he was a grand, open-handed gentleman, though still in business as an out-harbors trader?

"Top o' the mornin' to 'e, Barney Dever," said the great man; and you could have blown Barney down with the puff of a pipe.

"T'anky, Skipper," stammered the poor noddie. "Same to yerself, sir. T'anky kindly. Me gran'fadder be's a-frettin' for a bite o' red meat day an' night, sir—an' I has a complete old gun here, sir—an' maybe, wid God's help an' a pinch o' powder, I could shoot me a deer on the barrens. But devil the pinch o' powder's to be found in me horn, sir—an' divil a penny in me pocket!"

"D'ye tell me so, Barney b'y? And yer poor old gran'fadder craving a bite o' venison! Gimme yer powder-horn, b'y; an' if ye don't eat red meat tomorroy, 'twon't be for want of strong powder. And a fistful of bullets. And wot will the poor old man say to a pound o' 'baccy?"

"May ye never die till I kills ye, Skipper!" cried Barney Dever; and he went out of that store and out of that harbor with the powder and bullets and tobacco at top speed, for fear Skipper Clynch might recover from whatever ailed him, before Barney was out of earshot.

When well away, up on the barrens, Barney sat down atop a knoll and loaded



"I be's a better man nor the cowardly soul wot calls itself Bill Cronk!" said Barney.

the big gun. . . . If old Corney Dever had been up on that knoll, ailing stomach and all, looking abroad under the bright sun and gentle breeze at barrens and sea and sky, significant signs would have been detected and understood; for that poor old man was the master weather-prophet of the world. But to Barney it was just another unseasonably fine day.

The gunner struck inland with a likely spot for encountering migrating deer bright in his mind's eye. There were many such spots within a day's march; and Barney knew most of them. He flushed scores of snipe and many a covey of fat grouse; but such small game was not for his big gun, strong powder and clutch of three bullets. He was out for enough red meat to keep his grandfather quiet for a week at least; and the old gun was loaded accordingly.

Barney sighted what he was looking for sooner than he had expected to. It was a small herd feeding on a swell of rough ground a long way off. Barney considered the breeze, only to discover that it had fallen and faded away entirely. He saw that the sky was not as blue as it had been, but paid no attention to the fact. All his thought was to get into sure range of that little herd of deer. He had not gone far, and was still a long way out of gunshot of the little herd, when he felt a sudden draft of air. Not only that—it was cool air. He halted, removed his cap and gave his attention to this activity of the air. It breathed in his face. That was satis-

factory—from the deer to him. It baffled, sank, then fanned his left cheek. It flopped again, then blew on the hot back of his neck. Not so good, that! If it continued to blow from that quarter, then he was to windward of the deer. It did continue; there was nothing else to do but shift to leeward of the herd.

It was a long, hard shift. It was rough ground; and all the tumbled knolls and little ponds within a day's march seemed to have gathered in between him and the safe side of the wind. And the sunshine faded away. Barney traveled hard and was soon out of line—no longer directly between the wind and the deer. So he crawled onto a slab of rock and took a look. The deer were on the move. He saw the red meat walking away from him. And all he could see of the sun was a pale blur in the gray sky; and the wind blew cold out of the nor'-east. So he traveled again. He ran like a deer himself, with no thought but to circumvent that herd, no impulse but to get into gunshot of red meat. He stumbled, leaped, broke through thickets of black spruce-tuck that all but dragged the legs off him. He paused for breath; and after a few gulps of it he became aware that the cold wind was full of snow in flakes not much larger, and almost as dry, as grains of sand.

"It's a flurry I be's out a-gunnin' in," thought Barney Dever; and even his stout heart was somewhat daunted.

Those storms of snow-choked wind which are known elsewhere as blizzards, are commonly called flurries in Newfoundland. And who would have expected a flurry to come all of a sudden out of weather like a fine day in early September? Barney decided to go home—if he had the luck. He could head for home, anyhow. The master gunner of the world could not discover a herd in such weather as this, with eyes and nose and ears full of icy wind and snow.

The homeward course was no mystery so long as the wind held to its original course: but the way itself now offered many difficulties.

Barney, stumbling along and taking his breath in quick sniffs, heard a dull thud through the flurry that might have been the report of a gun. He halted and harkened, but heard nothing more. Then he crouched low for several minutes, with his head in a clump of fern, to ease his breathing. He went more strongly after that, for fifty yards or so—and then the marvelous thing happened: The

snow-filled wind took a sudden twirl and went straight up in the air for the time it would take you to count twenty-five; and for that time Barney could see all of ten yards to his front; and what he saw was a stag caribou walking right across his course. His heart took a jump that all but stunned him: but he brought the old sealing-gun up to his right shoulder and pulled the trigger. Red flame stabbed the icy gloom, and the recoil sent the gunner staggering. Then the wind came down from aloft and blew level again. Barney steadied himself and went leaping straight ahead through the blind storm; and at the fourth leap he fell over the dead stag—dead, with three bullets through its vitals.

HERE was meat for old Corney Dever! Barney skinned and paunched the carcass, but it was frozen to the hardness of rock by the time he had finished the job. The flesh was as stiff as the horns. Then Barney sensed the peril he was in—peril of perishing in the storm, with his breath pinched off and his heart's blood frozen as stiff in his veins as the blood of the stag was frozen on the snowy moss.

But Barney Dever was not the kind that dies easily; and this was not the first flurry he had been caught abroad in, though it was the worst. And he was clothed for mild autumn weather. He crawled round, tearing at moss and fern and the deadwood in every clump of brush. The stuff blew away as fast as he gathered it, until he thought of weighting it down with rocks. He heaped the stuff against the lee side of a high granite boulder. He wasted a score of matches in trying to set fire to the anchored moss and fern and deadwood. His fingers felt like thole-pins. Even his skull felt chilled through, and the brains in it as numb and stiff as frozen meat. He poured powder on the dry moss—enough of the precious article to drive clutches of bullets into six stags. And then, with the twenty-first match, he set the fuel afire with a flash in his face that set him back on his haunches with a smell of burnt hair in his nose. But what was the loss of a trifle of hair from lip and brow in exchange for a fire?

Barney Dever fought for his fire. He battled furiously for its existence; and for a time he derived more warmth from the fight than from the fire. Sometimes the icy wind tore it apart and whirled glowing masses of it into the devouring

storm; and sometimes, more like a tide of water than air, it pressed and held the poor thing to the ground until it was no more than a smear of red. But Barney fought for his fire; he saw his salvation in it. And it responded, like a creature of heart and intelligence. If the wind eased or lifted but for a moment, up leaped the defiant flames, crowned by a shower of sparks.

What with tending the fire and fighting for breath, Barney became somewhat light-headed. He thought of the storm as a monster determined to kill his fire and then take his own life. But he fought for the tortured flame and trampled embers as for the very spark of life in his own breast. Sometimes he had to lie down and bury his face in his hands to snatch a breath.

He carried to the fire everything upon which he happened to lay his desperate, numb, blindly fumbling hands. If it was a mossy stone, he placed it to windward of the fire; the same if it was a tussock of boggy roots and grasses. He tore into a thicket of stunted spruces, yanked them out by their bitter roots and pressed them down on the fire.

The wind shifted and slackened its pace. Now the snow had a chance to reach the ground and remain there. It thickened in the air and on moss and rock and hissed on the fire. The fire leaped and glowed so vigorously that even the shrubs of sodden, leathery spruce-tuck smoked, crackled, flamed.

Barney lay close to the fire until his nose was scorched, then turned over and held his ground until the hairs on his neck were singed. He moved off then, found the frozen carcass and hide of the stag, and dragged them to the ruddy circle of fire-shine. Well, he was alive, praise be to the saints! And the worst of the flurry was past. Now he had time to notice his thirst and hunger.

NO man of the out-ports ever goes abroad for a day without hanging a kettle to himself, and stowing a pinch of tea and a few cakes of hard-bread in a pocket. Barney scooped his little smoky tin kettle full of snow and set it on a corner of the fire. It soon boiled; and he added his pinch of tea. Six feet away from the fire, it was soon cool enough to handle. He swigged that brewing down, leaves and all, and felt much better.

Now for something more solid! He went at the red meat with his knife, cut a steak to broil on the embers, and

chunks to boil in the kettle. He thawed out the raw hide and hung it over his shoulders and down his back. This was comfort. He wolfed the broiled steak, set the bubbling kettle a little way off from the fire, filled and lighted his pipe. Life was worth living again! The brave fire warmed his front; the heavy hide of the stag warmed his back; tea and venison warmed his belly; burning tobacco warmed his nose.

Under such circumstances, a man could afford to think. He thought of his grandfather waiting for the red meat and cursing his stomach and the flurry. The poor old man would believe him dead; to see him would be a pleasant surprise for the poor soul. Then Barney thought of Mary Trimmer—but without much enjoyment, for Bill Cronk kept intruding on his mind.

Bill Cronk was a masterful man, a resident of Squid Tickle and the owner of a boat that did not leak. Having no ailing and complaining grandfather on his hands, and no domestic ties whatever, he had made a voyage to Brazil and half a dozen trips to the ice. He was a man of the world. He was smart, and the master of Skipper Clynch himself at the ciphering, so that while the skipper cheated all the other noddies who traded with him, Cronk cheated the skipper. And he was courting Mary Trimmer.

BARNEY kept his fire well fed. The wind was no longer a choking blast of death. It was no more than a breeze now, and scarcely strong enough to make a swirl or a bulge in the down-streaming drench of snowflakes. Barney was no longer in danger of being choked to death or frozen stiff. All he had to do now was to sit tight and make himself comfortable until the clouds had snowed themselves out or drifted off. Then he would shoulder his venison and plow his way home to Skiff Cove.

A queer sound came to Barney's ears through the soft hissing and whispering of snow and fire. It was faint and brief and in a despairing key. Barney snapped to his feet and stared behind him, and all round, at the ceaseless flickering down-pour of the storm. And then something came crawling out of the blind flicker into the circle of firelight. It was a man. Barney stooped down and turned it over.

It was Bill Cronk of Squid Tickle.

There lay Bill Cronk, all in. He opened his eyes, only to close them again. He parted his lips and moved them, but made

no sound. His head was bare. He carried neither gun, kettle nor belt-ax, and his clothing looked as if he had been dragged through miles of spruce-tuck; his boots were a mess of gashes, scratches and frozen mud.

"Looks like he been runnin' wild," decided Barney.

"Help!" suddenly screamed the man.

Barney jumped to the jerk of his heart. Silence closed in again. Barney wrapped the poor fellow in the deer-skin off his own back, and poured a mouthful of broth from the kettle between his teeth. The effect of that first taste of broth was astonishing. Cronk sat up yelling that he was lost, calling upon all the world and all the saints for help.

"Pipe down!" bawled Barney in his ear.

Cronk obeyed, grabbed the little kettle, drained the broth down his gullet and wolfed the lumps of boiled meat. Then Barney grilled a steak for him, which he gobbled with relish. He was becoming his old self again.

"So 'twas you discovered my deer, Barney Dever!" said he.

This was a puzzle for Barney.

"Dis be's my stag," continued Cronk. "Didn't ye hear de clap o' me gun?"

Barney got it then.

"Where be's yer gun now?" he asked coldly.

Cronk had to admit that he must have dropped it somewhere.

"Aye, ye dropped it—along wid yer ax an' kittle an' cap," drawled Barney. "Ye flang 'em away so's ye could run faster—wid terror at yer heels."

"I was lost!" cried Cronk.

"An' wasn't I lost too?" returned Barney. "But I shot a walkin' stag wid a blast o' t'ree bullets out o' me own gun; an' I made a fire. I didn't t'row me gun away an' run me buttons off an' holler for help like a baby wid a bogey arter it." He laughed suddenly, and merrily. "I be's a better man nor yerself, Sailor Cronk—good enough to kill meat in a flurry an' save me own life and the cowardly soul wot calls itself Bill Cronk. None too good, but plenty good enough, to go a-courtin' in Squid Tickle."

He laughed again.

"Mister Sailor Cronk, if ever ye go visitin' at Pat Trimmer's house ag'in, ye'll wish ye'd never glimpsed de shine o' me fire tonight, but was layin' froze abroad on de barrens, dead as venison," he said.

And he wagged a finger under Bill Cronk's frost-nipped nose.



Drums over Ethiopia

A favorite fiction writer gives you a picture of this much-discussed but little-known country as he himself has seen it.

By WILLIAM J. MAKIN

ONCE again the war-drums are thudding throughout all Africa: *Boom . . . boom . . . oom . . . doom!* A chilling sound even when heard in the hot, steamy nights of the Nile swamps. I have heard those drums while sleeping in a clay hut in Omdurman. I heard them in the Sud region where long-legged giants go about almost naked. I have heard them sounding in the Congo. An insistent, telegraphic thudding in the hot darkness.

On those occasions the African drums told of slave-raids, of marauding bands seeking the "black ivory" that Africa still provides for the cynical Arabs in Mecca and the Yemen. They have also told of the prowling of that dreaded secret society of Africa, the Leopard Men, who murder like beasts and worship like fanatics. And sometimes the thudding of those drums has crossed the Zambesi in the far south, and roused the Zulus from their ill-tilled farms to indulge in fierce factional fights. I have known the drums to herald the approach of a Black Christ, a madman whose baptisms meant drowning deaths for many.

Every night they sound in the hot darkness. Now they are telling of the black man's fight for what has been called bravely Africa's Last Empire. The secret language of the drums is understood by all in that dark Continent. If, in the lost reaches of the Congo, along the desert banks of the Niger or in the steaming undergrowths of the Zambesi, the black warriors cannot answer the

call, still a hatred of the white explorer is once more filling their thick skulls.

There lies the danger of this war over Ethiopia. To the white-suited and Panama-wearing natives of West Africa, to the coffee-drinking, burnous-clad Moors in Fez and Casablanca, to the monocled and check-suited gold-mine boys in Johannesburg, to the rickshaw-pulling Zulus of Durban, even to the fezzed Egyptians lounging in the carpet shops of the Mouski in Cairo—there has come the flaming news that Africa is once again at odds with the white man.

Is Haile Selassie—King of Kings, Lion of Judah and Emperor of Ethiopia—the long-expected leader who will checkmate white exploitation of the Dark Continent? In the bazaars of Omdurman men who remember the Mahdi of Allah, are asking that question. The Mahdi failed. In the garden of a villa that stands on a height of the lonely island of Reunion, against which the surf of the Indian Ocean rolls lazily, is another man whom Africa once believed to be its long-awaited leader. He is Abd-el-Krim, leader of the Riff against the military might of France and Spain. He too failed, and is now a prisoner in the hands of the French. There was bitterness in his voice as he said to me in that garden: "Some day, Africa will find its leader who will drive the white man from the Continent where he does not belong."

Those who know Africa, who have lived beneath its wonderful and cruel skies, and who have tried patiently to

In the belief that truth may be as interesting if not more strange than fiction, we each month print five of these fact stories. For details of the contest, see page 3.

REAL EXPERIENCES

understand something of the black thinking that goes on in the minds of Africa's millions, realize the terrible dangers of this war over Ethiopia. It is not merely the highlands of Abyssinia that are the battlefield. It is not merely a struggle between Galla tribesmen and imperially minded white men from modern Rome. The whole of Africa will be the battlefield, and from Cairo to the Cape the white man will be on the defensive. And so the Abyssinian watchers sit by their drums in the defiles and on the hilltops of Africa's last Empire.

It is war over Ethiopia.

FROM the ordered, comfortable routine of life aboard a British warship, I was dumped into the different chaos of life in Djibouti. The cruiser *Efingham*, flagship of the East India Squadron, plowed its way through the rather scared native divers of coins, responded with shattering effect to a salute of guns from the fort, and anchored in the roadstead.

An hour later I was padding the dusty streets of Djibouti, searching for the railway-station and that solitary railroad that leads to Addis Ababa, the capital of Abyssinia. But time stands still in Djibouti. "*Demain*" is the reply to nearly all active suggestions, and in sheer despair I was eventually washed up against a medley of cane chairs and dusty tables in the Place Menelik. This is the central square, and for anyone suffering from insomnia, an almost certain cure. It is easier to sleep comfortably in a cane chair in the Place Menelik than in the mosquito-net-draped rooms such as they provide in the hotels. . . .

The madman Van Gogh has given us a wonderful painting of a pair of old cracked boots. One of Rembrandt's masterpieces is the picture of a bullock's carcass in an abattoir. But no one, so far as I know, has made a painting of a fly-blown cake in a musty shop-window.

We all know that cake. Dried by the sun and swept by the dust, it has changed into a dirty yellow. The white icing has cracked, and is spotted where flies have settled and devoured portions. It has become a sticky, abhorrent mess.

There is a place on the map that bears a startling resemblance to the fly-blown cake. It is Djibouti, the place where the Paris pavement ends. Seen from the sea, it reveals the white and pink icing of buildings against the sun-scorched yellow of the desert. The white icing in this torrid zone attracts. Only

when I had stepped ashore did I realize that I had settled on a fly-blown cake.

The flies dominate the place. They are everywhere—a torment. You fight them desperately, but they swarm anew. You put down a cup and the black pests fill it. You eat a plate of soup, waving one hand furiously against the swarm. Somali boys stand over you wielding fans, and you see the flies crawl over their black faces. The boys are unconscious of them. Undoubtedly, this is a black man's country.

I spent six days in Djibouti, and heaved a sigh of relief when I left.

But there is one unique feature about this place where the Paris pavement ends. It is the one town in the world where you are awakened almost every morning by an earthquake. Not a serious one, but still an earthquake. One merely smiles at the first experience. The second earthquake seems more serious. Later, I noticed people prayed after an earthquake. And as the time came for my departure to Addis Ababa, I felt inclined to join them. But alas, the pestilential flies on that decayed cake prevent even prayer!

Nowadays, the sand-strewn ugliness of Djibouti has been further emphasized by the miles of barbed-wire that has been unrolled. Djibouti has fortified itself. Hangars to house airplanes have been hurriedly erected. Four six-inch guns have been based on Heron Island, commanding the approaches to the harbor and the roadstead, as well as the desert behind the town. And the small native garrison has been reinforced by the landing of Senegalese troops.

ALL African railway journeys are leisurely ones, and few of them are particularly comfortable. I have traveled from the Cape by rail as far north as Elizabethville. It is a journey of dusty *longueurs*, broken only by the magnificent spectacle of the Victoria Falls. I have journeyed from Mombasa to Nairobi, which because of the variety of big-game seen from the carriage windows has something of the excitement of a bus drive through Whipnade Zoo. And there is also a dusty journey from the Nile Cataracts to Khartoum, where it is best to seal, hermetically, the compartment in which one is traveling. Even so, one arrives at Khartoum smothered in sand.

With these experiences behind me, I was prepared for the worst in the jour-

ney to Addis Ababa from Djibouti. Yet even that was not as bad as the reality. And the first time I traveled this railway I was literally conducted *en prince*, for I was attached to the suite of Prince Henry, Duke of Gloucester, who was traveling to Addis Ababa as the guest of the Emperor, Haile Selassie.

I was therefore able to avoid the searching and blackmailing activities of the Ethiopian customs officials along the route. Moreover, on ordinary occasions, the train takes a matter of three days to accomplish the 460-mile journey. Provision is made for two night halts *en route* at places called Diredawa and Arash. Passengers and livestock abandon the train at both these points and crowd into the one hotel that is provided.

THE train, the Rhinoceros Express, stoked by a black man and driven by a Frenchman who is no longer white, puffs its way through a medley of African races. In the evening of departure, fuzzy-haired Somalis are staring in at coach windows. The next day, one is among the warlike Gallas and Danakils. Finally, one reaches the tall brown Amharas, the aristocrats of Abyssinia, with their long, combed beards. Even the Orient Express across Europe cannot give the amazing variety of races found on this journey. It is also a realization that Abyssinia is an empire, a collection of different, definitely characterized races.

And anything may happen on this journey. No one is really sure whether the track is existing. If it has not been washed away by heavy rains and floods, collapsed over the lava field, or disrupted by maddened big-game, the warlike Danakil bandits may have stolen the expensive steel rails. . . .

One expects to find the real microcosm of a nation in its capital. Paris is certainly France, and Berlin obviously the ruling city of Germany. I am not so sure that London is representative of Britain, or, less indeed, of the British Empire. And a few hours in Addis Ababa convinces one that this is not the real heart of Ethiopia.

Certainly Addis Ababa is representative of the polyglot tribes that cover the whole of the Abyssinian Empire. A street scene in Addis Ababa is a cosmopolitan scene indeed. The chiefs in their white shammas draped over white jodhpur breeches gallop past on mules. Their retinue of slaves follow at a trot on foot. No Abyssinian of consequence

would go anywhere without a crowd of slaves at his heel.

The brown Semitic faces of these Amhara aristocrats are an indication that this is no negro race that is fighting for its independence. There seems little doubt that the ruling caste penetrated Abyssinia from the north. They are of brown skin, not black, and their women have the brownish-yellow complexions of Kashmiris from the frontiers of India. Exceedingly attractive, too. The best women have their hair bobbed, and from what I could see the beauty-parlors of the bazaar in Addis Ababa do good business. The only African quality these women possess are the beautiful liquid eyes. And they do not hesitate to give expressive glances as they pass by. I can understand why those Europeans who have settled in Abyssinia have not hesitated to take a native woman to wife.

Few Europeans have ever mastered the Amharic language. To begin with, it has a 260-letter alphabet. But for purposes of getting about Addis Ababa it is only necessary to learn these few words:

Ish: All right.

Aouw: Yes.

Arjidallme: No.

And when you want information, you go up to the nearest Ethiopian policeman and ask for the *Utchie Gudai*. This is the Ethiopian Foreign Office.

ON my first visit I discovered that to move about Addis Ababa demanded much effort. The town straggles over a distance of about six miles. And if one abandons the excitement of driving about in a motor-car for the simple pleasure of walking, one suddenly becomes aware of the altitude. Eight thousand feet is no level for excessive exertions. But to stroll the streets is the only way to sense a town. Despite the fact that an hour's walk gave me the feeling of having climbed the first slopes of Mont Blanc, I persisted.

The crowds in the street were always dense; the road was cluttered with camels, motor-cars and groups of men on mules. To add to the confusion, traffic policemen had been instituted. Some one had seen a London traffic policeman at work, and the damage was done. These black men in uniform held up every car as a matter of course. They tried to stop several *resses* who ambled about on mules with their followers running barefoot. The *resses* paid no attention to these black policemen. Only

DRUMS OVER ETHIOPIA

the civilized whites obeyed them implicitly.

My work in Addis Ababa kept me traveling between the British Legation at one end of Addis Ababa, and the telegraph-office, managed by Italians, at the other. Somewhere between these two extreme points was the Hotel de France, a dismal, depraved hostelry kept by a cynical Frenchman, where I was permitted to share a room with a colleague for a mere two pounds daily. I was asked to use native boys to carry messages. It was only when I discovered that the native boy took two days to deliver a message at two hundred yards' distance that I gave up the system.

The plethora of meat served at every meal was enough to make even the most carnivorous man contemplate vegetarianism. Five courses of meat—and bad meat—were to be found at every meal in my wretched hotel. For the rest, vermouth, brandy and some extraordinary cocktails were there to help down this mess of meat. The group of journalists who inhabited this hotel, most of them belonging to the Paris newspapers, lounged about the dismal dining room with the air of a select suicide-club.

All the European Legations have been busy preparing their defences. Bomb-proof shelters, in anticipation of Italian air attacks, have been constructed. The British Legation is so soundly constructed by massive stones that it would make an almost perfect fort. The cellars are safe against anything but a direct hit. The German Legation has planned two deep tunnels in a hillside to shelter several hundreds. Even hotels are preparing bomb-proof shelters in their gardens.

The cosmopolitan crowd of Addis Ababa have been drilled against air attacks. But from my own survey of this town, I should say that it could be completely evacuated within three hours. True, there would be a good deal of hysteria, and polyglot excitement, but within those three hours nothing would be left except several huts, ramshackle buildings, the cathedral of St. George, and, of course the Gibbi, or palace quarter. The vast plains surrounding Addis Ababa could provide adequate shelter for all the population. All that is necessary is to have warning of the approaching airplanes. The watchers on the hilltops far away by sounding their drums will give this warning.

Drums over Ethiopia!

A crash after a barn-storming tour in America leads to a job flying for the Chinese war-lords.

By MAJOR

IT certainly was odd, the way "Laddie" White and I landed plump into the Chinese mess. Up to 1923, China to us was just a smear on the map, the place the laundrymen came from. We had no more idea of going there, when we left Chicago in the fall of 1922, than we had of flying to heaven. And we thought we had had enough of war.

Laddie had done his four-year bit in Europe for the French Foreign Legion. Though born in New York, I had enlisted at Montreal and wangled myself into the Royal Flying Corps. Laddie and I had met on the ship coming home.

Laddie was Lieutenant R. L. White—a lithe black-haired fellow, handsome as they make 'em. I am sandy-complexioned and homely. Laddie was a live wire, always looking for trouble. I am phlegmatic and cautious. . . .

We tried various jobs, and in 1922 I was an inspector at Curtiss Field on Long Island. But steady jobs were too tame, after the war. So Laddie and I got ourselves a couple of ancient Curtiss Jennies, and set out barn-storming. We had hardly left Chicago before Laddie pancaked his old crate. She was a total loss. That put it up to me to carry on with the remaining Jennie. We took in county fairs through the Dakotas, then up into Manitoba and points northwest.

For a while we had a grand time, stunting and risking the lives of innocent joyriders at five dollars a head. In the districts we selected, airplanes were still a novelty. So everywhere we went we ran into receptions, banquets, binges. Everything was fine except for the sordid detail that we were making two hundred dollars a day and spending two hundred and fifty of it for expenses. And to make things rosier, the carburetor of the lone Jenny began to go bad on us. It was an old OX5, ninety-horsepower motor, of wartime vintage. We made Yellowhead, B. C., not far from Vancouver, with the engine snarling and spitting every time I tried to make altitude.

Nevertheless there was a big crowd for that afternoon's show at Yellowhead.

Pilots at Large

PETER PAUL DEVLIN



Laddie had plastered the town with three-sheets. They announced that "Peerless Peter, the Champion of the World," (shades of Immelmann!) would give an exhibition of stunt flying *and* a "death-defying parachute descent." The parachute hop was essential. I did not dare to risk taking passengers up in that rickety plane with a sputtering motor. At the time I dreaded the thought of letting Laddie fly the ship while the engine was in such shape. To make it more interesting, just before we turned the prop, a farmer pointed to some high-tension electric wires at the end of the field.

"Don't touch those wires, my boys, or you'll sizzle like bacon!" he warned us.

I might add that the parachute I used was of the exhibition type in vogue twelve years ago. It was contained in a canvas bag laced with rawhide. This bag was fastened to the crosswires of the undercarriage. To make a jump, I had to crawl along the left wing at a height of about one thousand feet. From there I scrambled to the undercarriage. Then I had to fasten the clasps of the 'chute to the harness I wore around my waist. Next, I untied the rawhide lacing of the bag, and jumped. The weight of my body pulled the 'chute out of the bag. Given any luck, the thing opened after a fall of some five hundred feet.

Well, we took off, with Laddie at the controls and the motor sputtering fiercely. We were hardly off the ground before we were in trouble and had to make a forced landing. We taped up the carburetor with patches of wing linen and plastered it with airplane "dope." Then we took off again. With the engine still missing, we could not get more than eleven hundred revolutions a minute. This took us no higher than eight hundred feet. As the 'chute could not open with a drop of less than three hundred to five hundred feet, the minimum height for safety was one thousand. But I had to go through with it to earn the money we had already collected from the crowd. The big, clumsy wooden prop was turning so slowly I could count the rivets.

Laddie added further to my worries. He had a habit of flying left wing low. That was the side on which I had to crawl to reach the parachute. If he dropped it any more, I had an excellent chance of rolling off.

The wind was increasing, the sun going down. The jump had to be now or never. As I crawled into position, I looked down. I could see plainly the faces of the people in the crowd below. That showed how dangerously low we were flying.

I loosened the rawhide lacing of the parachute bag. . . . The fall seemed endless. But finally I felt the welcome jerk that indicated the 'chute was open.

Then a new and worse danger: I suddenly realized I was not falling vertically. The wind was so strong that it was blowing me straight toward those high-tension wires. I thought of the farmer's remark about "sizzling like bacon." Frantically I grabbed one of the ropes until it dragged down one side of the parachute. The thing almost collapsed. I fell with terrific speed, and crashed heavily. At that moment the 'chute filled with wind again, and I was dragged along the ground, slap into a wire fence.

When we got to our sleeping-quarters, we counted up the cash we had collected—ninety-eight dollars. I had visits from various spectators who told me they had heard me screaming, six hundred feet overhead, when I was headed for those wires. I was quite unconscious of it.

LADDIE and I talked things over. I had done some flying for the movie folks in Hollywood. We decided to take the ship to Vancouver, get it repaired and fly south. We did not know what a joke that decision was. The poor old Jenny was obviously on her last lap.

We took off for Vancouver and could not get above six hundred feet. At Kamloops we had to come down. We worked desperately on the motor into the small hours of the morning.

On the following day we cracked up. We fell less than five hundred feet—but that crash took us all the way to China!

We had reached the outskirts of Vancouver. Late in the afternoon the engine gave up with a final gasp. There we were with a dead stick, little more than four hundred feet up. I looked about wildly for a landing-place. We were losing altitude alarmingly.

I spied a small field that looked like a baseball park. I headed for it. Suddenly I saw telephone poles looming ahead of us. They seemed to be a thousand feet high. Avoiding them, we nearly fell into a spin. I wrenched the Jenny around just in time—and crashed into a tall tree. I heard a grinding noise as the right wing tore into the branches! Luckily I had cut the switch.

As the old Jenny took her last dive, Laddie was catapulted to the ground. A thousand bright stars were in my eyes—

When I came to, Laddie was bending over me anxiously. The blood was streaming into my eyes. My right wrist was broken, my right shoulder badly bruised. A resident of the neighborhood took us in. I was laid up ten days while Laddie tried to salvage the wreck of our ship. But she was a complete washout.

With our few remaining dollars we paid our board and got to Vancouver—by tramcar; and lucky to have the fare. We put up at a cheap but clean hotel.

We had hardly unpacked before a visitor was announced. He was a young Chinaman. This did not surprise us much; we had made Chinese acquaintances at every stopping-place. Their interest in aviation was even greater than that of the Canadians.

The young Chino who called on us spoke excellent English. He knew all about our crash and expressed his sympathy. Then he inquired:

"I wonder if you gentlemen would like to meet a friend of mine. He is exceedingly interested in aviation."

Laddie and I looked at each other. The young man continued:

"My friend would be highly flattered if you would condescend to have dinner with him tonight. I think you would find the meeting quite—interesting."

WHEN you're broke, a dinner is a dinner. We accepted. That evening an expensive American car called for us. It took us to a gaudy establishment in the Chinatown section of Vancouver. There we found our host, a large, well-fed, richly robed Cantonese named Mok Wong. He suggested the Mandarin type rather than the successful merchant. No

pidgin-English Chink, but well-educated and polite as only one of his kind can be. He spoke flowery words of sympathy for the crash of our ship. Then he said:

"Very many of my young countrymen are anxious to become qualified pilots."

"Yes, Mr. Mok, I discovered that last year," I replied. "I was an instructor at Curtiss Field in New York. Several of my pupils were young students from your country. They were sent over by Dr. Sun Yat Sen."

"So I have been informed," said Mok, much to my astonishment.

THE sixteen-course dinner was almost over before we learned what it was all about. We were to find out that this was a good old Chinese custom. They always beat all around the bush before they get down to business.

It turned out that Mr. Mok was not merely the prosperous owner of a chain of restaurants that he seemed to be. He was also an agent of the Sun Yat Sen government. There are people like him all over America. The apparently innocent business man in the Chinatown of New York, San Francisco or Seattle may be the secret representative of one of the powerful War Lords on the other side of the Pacific.

The real purpose of Mr. Mok's elaborate hospitality was to make us a proposition: We were to go to Canton as military advisers to Dr. Sun and instructors in aviation to his young followers. The terms, one hundred dollars a day and expenses. One hundred dollars apiece!

"There aint any such money," whispered Laddie. "Not for a couple of busted sky pilots."

But it was on the level. Mr. Mok showed credentials that we had to believe. What was more, he had the cash to lay down on the line. A letter of credit was to be deposited in a British bank at Hongkong. Out of this we were to be paid every week. Our salaries were to begin the day our ship sailed from Vancouver. As a final proof, we got a substantial cash advance. How could a pair of stranded barn-stormers refuse? We signed up for two years.

Although we did not know it at the time, we were destined to experience amazing adventures and participate in history-in-the-making. Laddie was to be killed, moreover, in the bleak wilds of freezing Manchuria—and my stay was to be of eleven years' duration instead of two. But that is all "another story."

A not-soon-forgotten record of a recent storm at sea by a ship captain who is also an able writer.

By CAPTAIN
GEORGE
GRANT



The Hurricane

I AM writing this on the corner of the settee, the typewriter jammed against the bulkhead of my cabin—for my vessel is in the northwestern Caribbean, rolling easily to the long, sleek swells of a hurricane that is advancing toward the Yucatan Channel with an ever-increasing intensity. For three days storm-warnings have been received twice daily from the Weather Bureau, and we have been on our toes seeking signs in the sea and sky which might indicate how close the hurricane lay. During that time the vessel has been snugged down; extra lashings have been put on the boats; the hatches have been well battened down and the tarpaulins have been made doubly secure against the rapacity of the wind, by rope which has been criss-crossed over them; the cabin ports have been covered with dead-lights—iron disks with rubber gaskets to ease the pressure of the breaking seas from the glass; and in the storeroom everything has been carefully chocked off. . . .

Time and again during these past few days I have been tempted to heave the vessel to, hoping the hurricane would maintain its reported course and pass to the southward of us, blowing itself out over the land of Yucatan; but I have kept on toward my destination, knowing that because we are to the northward of it, it might re-curve and catch us in the narrow waters of the Florida Straits. The free air currents of the general circulation around the globe tend always to the northward, and hurricanes follow them, sometimes swerving quickly when they encounter a formidable wall of high barometric pressure.

Now, for us, there can be no heaving to or turning back. It is raining; the

wind is freshening from the east; the land is under our lee, and the vessel must keep on until our position within the storm area is definitely known, when she will be maneuvered, if possible, to keep her clear of the vortex—called the "eye" of the storm because the central sky is always clear.

Nothing can be done as yet. But as the main body of the hurricane approaches, I must determine the bearing of the vortex. This is done by stopping the vessel and watching the direction of the wind. If it does not shift, but continues to blow steadily with increasing force, and with a falling barometer, it would indicate that she is on or near the storm-track, or line of progression. This is the most dangerous position, and every effort would have to be made to get clear of it before destructive squalls make her unmanageable and blow her into the vortex. Should the wind shift to the right, we will be in the dangerous semicircle, and the vessel will have to be hove to or driven with all the power of her engines to the northward in an effort to put as much sea-room as possible between her and the center, which might re-curve at any moment, and place her on the line of progression. But should the wind shift to the left, we will all sigh with relief. The vessel will be in the navigable semicircle and we will set a course, hold it, and flee to the southward before a fair and piping wind.

As I sit here and listen to the ever-increasing crescendo of the scudding storm, it all seems so simple. I can visualize a chart, the position of the vessel on it, that of the hurricane's center—and I know all the moves that must be made to win the fight. But I also know

that contingencies will arise, to be countered with quick-witted decisions. I have been in a hurricane once before!

The whistle of the speaking-tube on the bulkhead over my bunk has sounded a shrill, commanding note.

"There's a black squall making up in the east, sir. I can see it behind the rain. The barometer has started to go down," the chief mate has reported.

"I'll get into my oilskins and be right up," I have told him.

TWELVE hours have elapsed. . . . The danger is now past.

A flilip of spray, mingling with the driving rain, flung into my face when I emerged from the alleyway door to grasp the storm-rail on the deck house and fight my way to the bridge. The second and third mates were in the wheel-house, the light from the binnacle cutting their faces from the darkness, but the chief mate was sheltering in the weather-cab, and I joined him, after my eyes had become accustomed to the gloom.

"The squalls have been getting heavier, sir," he told me. "I thought that last one would rip the funnel out of her."

I did not answer right away, for broad off the port bow I could see the dark line of a squall making up against the night. Before it, the sea was being whipped into a froth of angry water. It struck like the blast from a cannon, and the vessel heeled dangerously over, her bow swinging helplessly to starboard before the heft of it.

It passed, leaving a perceptible lull.

"Are all hands out?" I asked.

"Yes sir!" the chief mate answered. "Standing by in the lee of the fiddley."

"Good!" I glanced around. "Tell the second mate to keep an eye on the barometer," I ordered. "We'll heave to. Let her go dead slow."

He moved away. The engine-room telegraph clanged. The vessel eased down, swung beam on to the strident east wind, and fell into the trough, to roll heavily with violent lurches to starboard.

An hour passed. The barometer continued to fall slowly, and the wind-squalls followed close upon the heels of each other, yelping in their frenzy like hounds at the chase. The murk closed in about the vessel, to be pierced incessantly by lightning. The rain was a deluge of driving water. Our oilskins were sodden, useless as protection against its fury.

"We're in for it, I'm thinking, sir," the chief mate shouted, cupping his hands

around his flushed face. "It looks like the hurricane was heading our way!"

When I went back to the bridge, the dawn was creeping into the sky behind the pall of sodden cloud around us. It seemed a wonder to me that light could pierce the murkiness, for in the gathering day the fore-castle-head was shut out, while the mastheads were hidden by the wind-hounded rain. The squalls gathered strength to rush past with such violence that, as we clung to the bridge stanchions, it was with difficulty we could breathe. The sea was rising too, leaping out like menacing rocks from the murk to tower high upon the port beam before breaking with a roar like thunder. But it was a true sea, and the vessel was as light on her feet as a young colt never in harness; she rolled, pitched, and twisted with an unerring precision, like an athlete vaulting over hurdles, and came back to an even keel with a tremor of excitement throughout her rugged length. How long she would behave, I could not tell.

"We seem to be on the line of progression," the chief mate shouted, his voice scarcely more than a whisper beneath the shrieking furies of the day.

I had thought that too. The wind was steady from the east and increasing, and the barometer still fell. I had decided to ring for full speed and make a break for the southward when it seemed as if the wind veered to the right. The dangerous semicircle!

Clinging to a stanchion in the center of the bridge, I peered ahead and longed for the fury of the true gale which would give a vessel a sporting chance. There was no joy in this; no thrill when the towering seas raced down—knowing as I did that at any moment they might send us into the trough of confused and tumbling combers. There was no song in my heart; no lilt in the lift of the ship. I could not clear my face of the streaming water to sing in the crisp storm air as the bluff bow reared high on a mighty roller to plunge in a dollop of invigorating spray:

Who hath desired the sea?

The immense and contemptuous surges?

The shudder, the stumble, the swerve,

As the star-splitting bowsprit emerges?

No! I could not sing. I could only hold my breath, and cling, and wait!

The sea became confused. One wave rushed from the north to meet another coming from the east. High on the

beam they met, and pinnaced like a mountain—held for a second to stifle the howling of the gale, broke to fling against the hull with a sickening thud! Live water filled the air.

In the hidden distance a squall shrieked like a locomotive escaping from a tunnel. I could feel the vibration as it raced down with a hurricane force. It burst with fury indescribable, to tear at the shrouds and the superstructure in the frenzy of its attack. The rain and spindrift became horizontal needles, blinding us. The vessel labored and creaked, and lay over on her beam-ends, to lurch with a nauseating motion.

At the height of the squall the canvas weather-cloth split asunder with a crack like thunder and blew away in a thousand flapping shreds, leaving us all exposed to the heft of the wind. Flat on our stomachs we sprawled, and hand over hand, taking advantage of the list, we slid across the wet deck to the shelter of the wheel-house.

For a minute or more the squall lasted; then it eased away to leeward, and the gale again took charge; as I scrambled to my feet, I heard a sighing from the direction of the stern. I knew what it was. I took a step toward the compass—halted, afraid to look, afraid that my eyes might give the lie to my ears.

But the third mate had no qualms. He peered in through the binnacle cover. He looked up at me.

"The wind's shifted, sir!" he shouted. "It's gone into the north-northeast!"

NORTH-NORTHEAST—a shift to the left! The vessel was in the navigable semicircle! It seemed too good to be true. I peered into the calm gimbal-steadied face of the compass, and glancing over my shoulder toward the port wheel-house window, judged the direction of the wind from the slant of the rain. The north-northeast! I wanted to sing, but I refrained. I knew that although we were on the southward of the vortex, it could not be very far away, and at any moment the vessel might be swept into it. The time for action had come.

"Ring up for full speed!" I shouted to the third mate. He clutched his oilskins around him and braved the tumult on the bridge. I glanced again at the compass. The vessel was heading south-southeast, slowly falling beam on to the wind. "Put your helm to port," I or-

dered the quartermaster. "Try to bring her to sou'-sou'west!" The land had gone under the lee with the shift of wind, and we had more than fifty miles of sea-room.

The chief mate came to the wheel-house door as the vessel shook when the stern lifted up and the engines raced.

"The wireless antenna has come down, sir!" he reported. "It's trailing over the side!"

"Get it on board and rigged again," I told him. "They'll think on shore that we've gone down if they don't hear from us."

"Aye-aye, sir!" he answered, and he swung away without more ado, like the deep-water sailor-man he was.

All hands came from where they were sheltering below, and soon I saw them working on the damaged gear, like phantoms through the screeching gloom that was the day.

AFTER what seemed hours the boat-swain—a young Irishman, fearless and strong—left the boat-deck for the forward well, carrying over his shoulder a length of manila rope. Steadying himself for but a moment against the violent lurching of the vessel, he waited his chance, then plunged into the surging water and fought his way to the mast.

Up the iron ladder on the fore part he climbed to the top, where he paused for breath, his arms around the starboard derrick. He looked up, and he looked down; then on up the derrick he shinned. It was ticklish work, and I felt a sympathetic shiver race along my spine.

He reached the top of the derrick. He stretched out into space and grasped the topmast backstay. He let go his legs. The wind sent him flying like a piece of bunting straining to be free!

But when it seemed that he would be blown away, the vessel, heeling to port, brought his legs back to the stay. Up it he went, hand over hand, fighting every inch of the way; now lost to view in the mist-wraith; now swaying through space over the tumbling water of the storm; but ever nearer to his goal.

When he reached the spider-band, to which the eye of the stay was shackled, he stood up, married to the mast with the pressure of the wind, and with expert fingers rove off the dummy hal-yards, by which the new antenna would be hoisted.

Before he started the descent, I saw him, through a rift in the rain curtain,

look squarely into the brunt of the storm. A look of triumph was on his face, as if he rejoiced in the strength of the body that could withstand and overcome the furies of the elements. Yet up in the clouds, on that swaying masthead, he seemed as frail as a bird.

The descent racked him with its danger. He had to bring the ends of the halyards down with him. The bights tailed out, taut as violin-strings, and tugged with every motion of the vessel. There were times when I thought that he had weakened, for he halted in midair and clung on. I expected him to lose his grip of the backstay and go flying, like a rag of cloth, into the angry waters under the lee. But he reached the deck in safety, and went about the work of rigging the new antenna as if nothing untoward had been accomplished.

With a further shift to the north, the wind increased and the hurricane blasts leveled the sea into a froth of seething foam and carried the spindrift, in an almost impenetrable sheet, forward along the decks. The vessel, stern on to it all, but yawing wildly, seemed to be lifted bodily from the pursuing clutch of the tumultuous waves; seemed to be held, as if by a stern sea-anchor, while she trembled throughout her mighty frame.

We could not see. Our eyes were blinded by the whiplash of the swirling spray, and the windows of the cabs and wheel-house were blurred by the torrential rain.

We could not hear each other speak. The squalls deafened us with their eldritch shrieking, and they seemed to grope, in their indescribable fury, with a thousand unseen claws for a vital spot by which to rend us.

We just clung to the stanchions, rails and life-lines, confident in the engines which turned tirelessly and faithfully, exerting a pressure on the rudder to keep the vessel stern to the wind while we hoped, all the while, that a kind Providence would keep other laboring vessels clear of our track.

TOWARD eight bells a perceptible lull came, a slight lessening of the wind, through which the familiar ship noises could be heard. Anxiously I peered aft. A sea like a mighty mountain loomed through the murkiness astern, rose high above the poop with an awe-inspiring frightfulness, its crest curling in readiness to break. The vessel yawed widely. I thought she would broach to.

"Look out!" I shouted. "Hold on!"

But as the words left my lips, the wind died out, fell to a calm, and the comber fell beneath the poop in a harmless, sulky mass. The vessel heeled over, scooped dead water over her port bulwarks, but held to her course.

Only for a minute the lull held, a minute in which I wondered if the vessel, by some mischance, had reached the eye of the hurricane—that dangerous eye where great masterful seas race to meet each other, and on meeting, fight with each other for the right to rule the storm.

MY apprehensions were soon set at rest. In a live white squall that rent the world apart with ferocious rapacity and swept the howling fragments into space, the wind went into the north and steadied in that direction as though held in a vise.

"The barometer has stopped falling, sir!" the third mate shouted. "It's inclined to go up!"

I nodded, happily. Although the vessel rolled heavily, smothering herself incessantly in a clutter of spray, there was comfort on the bridge now, comfort and relaxation, for I knew the vortex of the hurricane was clear of us, and traveling fast to the north.

The chief mate came to my side. "Look! There's a rift in the cloud, sir!" he exclaimed, raising his bloodshot eyes in the direction of the fore-truck.

As I followed his gaze, it seemed as if I watched a miracle take place. Only a few minutes before the murk was pressing in from all sides; now there was a lightening of the cloud. Lighter it grew, and the dim outline of the sun came through the speeding scud. Blue sky followed, clearing the mist-wraith from off the troubled water.

"Enough blue there now to make a pair of Dutchman's pants," the chief mate laughed.

I nodded again. I was almost too weary to speak.

"The weather's fining away," I said to the third mate, whose watch it was. "We'll keep her going this course until I come on deck."

"Aye-aye, sir," he answered; and as I walked toward the ladder leading down into my cabin, I heard him say to the second mate: "I'm glad we're out here and not on shore today. Houses will be tumbling down and trees uprooted."

As I thought it over, I was glad too. The sea is a safe place in a storm!



She sang a hymn because she was frightened—and afterward discovered it had saved her from real trouble.

By ELIZABETH
MCALPIN

The Spook Was Real

FOR seven long years we lived far out in the country, on a plantation surrounded by broad fields, tall trees and negro cabins here and there in the clearings. For seven long years I had been, every fourth night, taking my husband down to catch the ten-thirty train that took him to his work in a distant city; and for seven long years the darkies had been telling me:

"Miss Liza, you better be keeful taking Mr. Bob to dat train down dat lonesome road th'ough dat swamp dat time o' night. Dat 'ere curvin' bridge in de middle o' de swamp am ha'nted, sho as you born. We done seed dat 'ere ha'nt wid our own eyes, rat in de middle ob de road. Course we knows you kin shoot; but whut good it do ter shoot a ha'nt? De bullets go slam th'ough him, an' he don' pay 'em no min'. You better listen to us, sho."

Their repeated warnings never affected my peace of mind, but it was a spooky place and gave me the jitters to have to slow down on my lonesome trip home from the train. The road was narrow and dark and slinky-looking, with tall whispering trees on each side of the deep ditch that dropped down from it. If something did happen to pop up in one's path, there was no way to back or turn the car. The bridge itself was long and narrow and rickety, and approached on both sides by a curve in the road—and usually one could hear a "squeench-owl" crying just as one hit the bridge. A "squeench-owl" is a small owl that makes an uncanny noise like some one in great suffering—its mournful voice rises and falls in an unearthly long-drawn-out quaver, like a wail on one minor string of a violin. The darkies say it is the sign of bad luck or death.

I hated to hear them, and especially at night on that bridge, even if I am not superstitious. I always drove with one hand on the wheel and one on my nine-shot automatic, my eyes glued to the light of the car in the road. By that you will know I wasn't as brave as I made out! Then I had formed the habit of singing as I drove home, not very loud, but loud enough to keep my courage up.

On this particular night I had forgotten all about the spook the darkies had often warned me of, and I was feeling good. It was a beautiful night, the kind I loved best, partly cloudy and faintly stirred by winds, with half a moon painting pictures over the trees that showed dusty and leafless in the day. The car was hiccupping along; I was enjoying it all and singing a song that our big fat colored cook Annie had taught me:

*"One day as I was walkin', walkin' down
the lonesome road,
The Holy Spirit came to me and he
filled my heart with joy-joy-joy!
For I am in His keer, in my Savior's keer,
For I—ah-h—think o' my Lord; I'm in
His keer!"*

I had just rolled out the last "keer" with what I thought was a fine imitation of Annie's wail, when I turned the corner leading onto the bridge, and a "squeench-owl" let out his ghastly wail into the night. And then I saw ahead of me in the middle of the bridge a figure—illuminated faintly by the misty rays of the moon, tall and waving. Ugh! Heavens! Heavens! what cold shivers pervaded me! "Sister," thinks I, "you nonbeliever in spooks, here's the spook!"

I forgot my gun; in fact, I think I put it gently down on the seat! I didn't stop or hesitate. I had to keep going.

Desperately I thought: "Well, if it's a spook, I'll just ride right through him!" So I speeded up the car, and in a quavering voice I began singing again:

*"Oh, Jesus got His arms all around me,
no evil can be-harm me,
Kase I—ah—think—o' my—Lord;
I'm in—His—keer!"*

When I got to the last "keer" and quite close to the figure, it slid quietly into the shadows of the bridge, or over it, and disappeared from sight. And did I make that car lum the rest of the way home! How did I know but what that thing was right behind me?

When I was safely inside and the door securely double-bolted with the long bar that ran through two planks on the side: "Heavens, Mary," I gasped to my wide-eyed oldest child, "I don't think I'll ever take your father to that train again, at least not unless I can drag some of these scary darkies along!"

Next morning when the colored boy came to the house, I told him about it. "Twas sho that ha'nt we done tol' you bout, Miss Liza, 'deed it was."

But when I went into town later on, I found out what my "ha'nt" really was.

"Get frightened last night when you brought your husband to the train?" our friendly sheriff asked.

"How did you know?" I gasped.

"Well we caught a crazy negro this morning about day. The asylum in Jackson had warned us to be on the lookout for him. We found him in the swamp blubberin' like a baby, and saying he had tried to kill a white woman last night and take her car, but his mamma came down and started singing to him from heaven, and he couldn't do it. He said she was singing something about Jesus had His arms around him. He had two guns and he's crazy, and has killed two men already. You had a narrow escape. Better take some one along next time!"

"And I thought it was a spook and I was seeing things!" I gasped.

"Spook, my eye!" snorted the sheriff. "It's a darn' big darky, and a mean and nutty one."

When I got home, I ran to the kitchen and told Annie: "Annie, if you hadn't taught me that song, there might have been six little orphans here tonight, and I might have been dead!"

Then I told her the story.

"For de Lord's sake, honey, you sho had Jesus' arms roun' you dat time, thank heaven!" Annie cried.

When the

*How it feels to be
buried alive.*

"HOLD all!" came a voice as from a long distance. I knew I was dead—so this voice must be in the next world.

"So the jinx did get me!" I murmured. "Pity I didn't quit sooner."

A light flashed in my eyes; a voice I recognized as the shift-boss' said:

"My God, there's a head in the chute. It's Mac's. —Mac, are you alive?"

"N-no. . . . Yes, I guess—so," I got out with an effort.

So apparently I wasn't dead. . . .

I'd been a hard-rock miner all my life except the brief period while with the A.E.F. On my return and discharge from the army, I went to Butte, and secured work in a mine near there, in which I had been working for two months and had been followed by a jinx that dogged every move, so I'd decided to quit before it overtook me. On that day, which would have been my last, I'd been ordered down on the ninth level to help another miner, Bert Parks, clean out a "glory-hole."

That was it, the glory-hole! It had caved. I wondered where Bert was.

The glory-hole was caused by the ground caving before it could be timbered. It was up from the level thirty feet; was floored over. Ten feet below was another floor; between these two floors were timber sets of heavy posts, caps and girths, every six feet. In the center of the lower floor was the mouth of a six-by-six-foot chute into which we were shoveling the dirt which lay upon the upper floor. Above us was an open space about twenty-four feet square with the back (roof) hanging about fourteen feet above the floor and no timbers or braces to hold the ground. As soon as we had the floor cleaned, timber-men would come in and timber tight against the walls and back. This kind of a place is a "glory-hole."

Big Tom, a thorough miner and shifter, placed us at work after going over the walls and back. Leaving, he'd said:

"Keep your eyes and ears open. This ground is treacherous. It's got away

Mine Roof Fell

By TOWNSEND MACNEIL



twice. At the first movement you feel, drop down to the manway."

Occasionally we threw our carbide lamps round and listened. We could hear men working in the stope (room) some thirty feet away where there was a chute and manway same as we had.

How long after we started mucking (shoveling) before it came, I don't know. Both of us were shoveling when I felt a sound (that's the only way I can describe it), heard Bert gasp as though hit. Even while feeling and hearing these sounds, the whole hill seemed on top of me, beating, smothering and bearing me down. There was no time to think or act. That awful weight hit me everywhere at once. Dirt filled my lungs, ears; I couldn't breathe. Even as my senses faded and I knew this was the finish, I felt the timbers and floor give; knew that tons of rock and dirt were carrying me down—smothering me. . . .

"Mac, are you alive?" came that voice again.

"Oh, yes—I'm—alive," I murmured.

A light played on my face, and Big Tom said: "Mac, you are buried up to your head in the chute. Do you hurt?"

"N-no," I replied.

"Try moving your head," he ordered.

I tried moving my head. It moved.

"Does it hurt to move it?" he asked.

"No—it—don't—hurt. . . . Talking—does," I got out.

"O. K., old fellow," said Big Tom happily. "If talkin' hurts, don't talk. We'll get you out of there, *pronto*."

Lights flashed round as the shift-boss studied the place. I studied it too. As he said, I was buried to my head in the mouth of the chute. I was in the bottom of a hole, bowl-shaped and composed of loose, treacherous ground; the sides of the bowl were standing at an acute angle some twenty feet distant, and the back (or roof) was above some eighteen feet. Twelve feet above me and twenty feet to one side were the timbers of the manway of what had been the adjoining stope, and on this the shifter and others were standing.

Apparently when the ground caved, it carried floor, timbers, Bert and me to the floor below; the dirt pouring into the chute carried me with it, fortunately feet first. Then the ground stopped caving just as the muck reached my head. As the dirt and I went into the chute, it packed round my body like molten lead, and I was thus imprisoned in a vise-grip which numbed all feeling of my limbs, made my stomach feel as though it would burst with pressure and my breathing a painful, laborious process.

The shifter sent after Martin the foreman, and after more help; he placed a guard at the chute gate on the level below. While waiting, Big Tom talked:

"You, Mac! Keep your courage. This ground won't move bad for a while. You'll be out then. You don't think there is a chance for Parks, do you?"

"Bert—was—caught—first. I—heard him—gasp—as—the—slide—hit—me," I managed to get out slowly.

"That means Parks is done for," said Tom. "And old-timer, don't you try to talk; save the spiel till after you're out. Bert probably never knew what happened."

I nodded. Then: "Thought I was."

"I thought likewise," said Tom, "when Mike brought word of the slide and its taking part of their stope. You're lucky. You may be born to be hung, but not to be killed underground. Here's the men coming. Now to get busy."

MARTIN with others stepped out of the manway. The two bosses I saw talked briefly; Martin nodded; then he spoke to me in his easy quiet voice:

"Mac, I've stopped all work so there will be no noise or jar to start this ground moving again, and Tom has the right plan to get you out. Keep your nerve. We'll do our best."

With the coming of help the glory-hole was lit from the juice on the level below; timbers were rigged, put out over the center, and ropes dropped down to me. This was all done quietly.

"No loud talking, no noise, no sudden moves," said the shifter. "Work fast, but quiet and careful; not only for his life, but your own. If this ground starts, it will take us all, so don't get reckless."

As the ropes dropped, Big Tom ordered: "Mike and Jim down, stand by to relieve every fifteen minutes; don't lose time in the change. When you land off the rope, step light. Be careful in every move; pick the dirt out from around Mac, and pile it in dike shape. Mike, take this cloth and swab out Mac's mouth and nose."

The first fifteen minutes saw the muck out down to my chest. This gave much easier breathing. As fresh workers relieved the tired ones, Martin reappeared. Looking round, he nodded, then came down the rope to me.

"Think you can stand it?" he said as he pulled out a flask and poured a shot of whisky. "It's diluted so it won't burn or choke. Take your time and sip it. That's what I'm down here for." And he patiently fed me three good doses. Man, but it tasted good, and warmed me down to where there was no feeling. Then he rigged a cover over my head. "There, if a flock of rocks fall from the back, they'll bounce off that instead of your dome," he said, and with a pat on the shoulder he left.

MARTIN had barely reached the timbers when a rumble was heard like distant thunder; instantly that flock of rocks did fall from the roof, and a slide started from the sides which buried me; but Alex and Tim, the two men working, kept pushing the dirt away from my mouth, holding to the rope with one hand. They were knee-deep when the slide stopped. The instant it stopped, both let go the ropes, stooped and dug the dirt from my head with their hands.

"Hurt?" asked Alex.

"No—scared," I answered.

"You telling us!" said Tim, chuckling.

"All right below?" asked Martin from the timbers.

"All right, boss," replied Alex, and at this Martin disappeared.

Some one had disobeyed orders, and he was going to get hell, was my thought as I watched these two cool-headed and brave miners clearing the dirt from me.

Also floated through my mind, Big Tom's words, that I wasn't fated to be killed underground, for, if that dirt had fallen before the tin covering had been rigged over me, I'd have been dead or near dead; and if men with less nerve and wit than these had been working, I'd been smothered. "Yes," I thought, "I'm going to get out; I don't know how bad I'm hurt below, but I don't believe it's serious."

"As you were before," said Big Tom cheerfully. "That was a bad scare, but no damage done; only a good warning, which we'll heed. Four work down there instead of two, and four stand by the ropes. You below, don't stop to dike the dirt. Here's a spoon and a hoe to scrape with. Work fast."

EVEN as Tom still talked, the four got my arms loose.

"Don't stop to work on Mac's arms," warned the shifter. "Just keep digging; and, Shorty, Slim, go down and work Mac like you would a post in the ground. It will help loosen that muck. —Mac, we're treating you rough; after you're out, we'll be gentle."

"O. K. with me, boss," I answered.

Down came those two—pushed and shoved me as if I was a piece of wood. I wasn't much more. Dirt was baled out. Fresh men relieved the tired ones. At last loose, with a pull I came out *kerplunk*, was fastened to the rope and hauled up to safety.

Barely had I been carried down to the level when a rush of air and dull roar told us the ground had again caved and filled the glory-hole. Maybe it was due to start; maybe because the men had been careless after I was safe. In either event I again missed death by minutes. Whether it was that knowledge, the relief, exhaustion or all combined, I passed out as they put me on the car; when I came to, I was in the hospital, where I spent ten days before I got on my feet, weak but otherwise sound as ever. . . .

Reporting at the office, I learned Bert's body had been found. There being no dirt in his lungs but a hole in his head, he had evidently been killed just as Big Tom said. The glory-hole filled in the slide, we heard, but was now recovered.

"Ready to work?" asked Martin.

"Think I'll drag my time. Maybe I'll take up drinking. It's safer," I answered.

Martin shook hands with me.

"Good luck. When you want a job, come back."

But—I never went back.

Should a Wife Surrender to Any Rival?

Husband . . . wife . . . and the other woman. That, briefly, is the theme of "Pattern for Three" by Mary Hastings Bradley. It is a triangle story—but it is a triangle story with an ending so different that we feel sure Redbook readers will express their reactions to us by letter. We invite criticism of this frank and outspoken novel, and will pay \$1,000 in cash for the best letter dealing with the subject. Letters must not be more than 500 words long, and must be mailed to us before March 10th. Anyone may compete, with the exception of employees of The McCall Company (publisher of Redbook Magazine). This controversial novel is published COMPLETE in the March issue of Redbook Magazine, on sale February 5th, which also will contain full details concerning the Contest.

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